

1 Samuel Devotionals

1 Samuel DEVOTIONALS Our Daily Bread

1 Samuel 1:1-18

PUT ON HOLD

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.--Psalm 37:7

I'm sure you've had it happen to you. You call the appliance store and ask for the service department. "Can you hold?" a cheerful voice asks, and before you know it you're hearing music. Every so often a taped message assures you that your call will be answered. You wait and wait. You think, 'I could have driven over there and back by now!' You feel forgotten and that nobody cares.

Sometimes it seems that God has put us on hold. We pray and pray about a matter of extreme importance, but nothing happens. Nothing!

I'm sure that's how Hannah felt. She was asking God for a baby. Childlessness was a curse in her day. To make it worse, her husband's other wife ridiculed her mercilessly. Hannah wanted desperately to give her husband a child. She prayed out of deep pain and bitterness. Yet year after year she did not conceive.

How can we reconcile the apparent silence of God to our repeated prayers? Remember that God's wisdom surpasses our own. What we're asking for might harm us. We can't see the whole picture. Our timing is not God's timing.

When God puts you "on hold," don't grumble. You can entrust your most cherished longings and desires to Him, and then patiently wait for Him to answer. - D C Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When we call out to You, O Lord,
And wait for answers to our prayer,
Give us the patience that we need
And help us sense Your love and care.--Sper

When God puts You on hold, don't hang up!

1 Samuel 1:1-20

Our Deepest Needs

Try asking a 15-year-old to enjoy "family time" with his parents on a Friday night. Ask him why he isn't happy to play board games with his little sister while his friends are all going to a school ballgame.

His frustration might be similar to what childless Hannah felt when her well-meaning husband asked, "Am I not better to you than ten sons?" (1 Samuel 1:8). It appears that he didn't understand her needs, that he didn't realize she was struggling with more than her inability to have a baby. That was reason enough to be upset, but I believe there was more.

Just as a 15-year old desires to be accepted by his friends, Hannah's deep need was to have God's approval. A childless woman in her culture felt dishonored by God, because she thought He was denying her a part in fulfilling His promise of the Messiah. Hannah was willing to give up her child to God's service if only she could know that He hadn't rejected her. Her prayer was finally answered, and her heart overflowed with joy (2:1-10).

We can learn from this godly woman. Human relationships are important, but our critical need is to know that we have the approval of God. He alone can satisfy our deepest needs. —Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Christ's love and care cannot be spent—
My anxious heart can be content;

For though the world may cease to be,
God lives and loves and cares for me. —Anon.

When we have nothing left but God, we'll find that God is enough.

1 Samuel 1:21-2:11

A Mother's Sacrifice

It's often difficult for parents to "let go" of their children, allowing them to be independent. Because of the strong emotional bond, this is especially true of mothers. They like to keep their children close as long as possible.

My wife and I have experienced this firsthand as our two older girls have moved on to life on their own (one is away at college; one is married). I know how difficult it is for my wife to see her little girls leave home. Of course, it's not easy for dad either!

Imagine letting go when your child is very small, as Hannah did with Samuel. For us today, that kind of sacrifice is inconceivable. Yet that's what Hannah and her husband Elkanah did.

This mother's sacrifice was remarkable as an example of complete trust in God. Notice what Hannah said after she dedicated her son to God's work: "My heart rejoices in the Lord" (1 Samuel 2:1). She didn't express bitterness or anger—just total release of her only child, knowing that God's work and will for him were best.

Releasing our children to the Lord and His will for their lives demands great faith. As our children grow up, we need to prayerfully entrust them to God's care. If we do, we'll experience the peace and joy of knowing that God loves them even more than we do. — Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Our children belong to the Lord
From the time they are very small;
So let's dedicate them to Him,
And release them to His call. --Fitzhugh

Children are in good hands when parents give them to the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:19-28

The Joy Of Waiting

Nine months can seem like forever for a mother-to-be. In the first trimester, hormonal changes sometimes cause lingering morning sickness. Emotions rise to the surface, prolonging afternoon blues. Then a changing appetite stretches out evening hours with late-night cravings for pizza, chocolate, and dill pickles.

During the next 3 months, Mom outgrows her clothes and spends long hours looking for a new wardrobe. The last trimester turns normal activity into a chore as the final watch begins.

Then, suddenly the endless waiting is over. Nine months become like yesterday's newspaper. They are gone. They become insignificant, a faint memory—overcome by joy. Ask the new mom if she regrets enduring her pregnancy. Never!

Hannah's wait began even more slowly. For years she was unable to have a child. She felt so unfulfilled, so dishonored (1 Samuel 1). But the Lord remembered her, and she conceived. Her joy was complete.

Hannah waited patiently and saw the Lord turn her sorrow into overflowing joy. Her song (2:1-10) is a reminder that disappointment and the most bitter distress can lead to fulfillment and delight. For those who wait on the Lord, long hours of enduring will one day give way to rejoicing. —Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Let patience have her perfect work;
Let God refine your gold;
For in His time He'll show you why,
And blessings great unfold. —Bosch

God's gift of joy is worth the wait.

1 Samuel 1:9-18

Inner Turmoil

Sometimes I feel as if I'm in a bad relationship—with myself! Whenever Julie the writer starts a paragraph, Julie the editor interrupts. "No, no, no. Don't say it that way. Why are you always so negative?" Or "What makes you think you have anything worthwhile to say?"

Before I've completed a single thought, my alter ego has torn it to shreds. This is a very debilitating ritual. It's also common to the human condition.

Satan loves to distract us with criticism, and he tries to get us to use it on others as well as ourselves. We judge prematurely and try to correct others before we know what they're saying. That's what Eli the priest did when Hannah was crying out to God. He interrupted her prayer and accused her of being drunk (1 Samuel 1:12-14).

But God lets us pour out our hearts to Him in full honesty (Ps. 62:8). In fact, the Psalms indicate that it is when we are expressing our doubts and fears that God resolves them. Many Psalms that begin in despair end in praise (22; 42; 60; 69; 73).

When a battle is raging inside, pour out your soul before the Lord (1 Samuel 1:15). He can make sense out of what seems senseless. —Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When turmoil seems to hold full sway
And be the ruler of the day,
I'll open up my heart and find
That God with peace can ease my mind. —Hess

Prayer does not make God see things as we see them; it helps us see things as God sees them.

1 Samuel 1:28

"Who Gets Our Kids?"

"As long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord." - 1 Samuel 1:28

When Hannah dedicated Samuel to God, she meant business. She didn't just take him to the temple for dedication; she left him there. She turned him over to Eli to bring him up in God's service.

As I listened to a preacher talk about Hannah's commitment, I began to wonder, Who gets our children today? Samuel was continually taught and instructed by Eli in God's temple. Who teaches our kids? Let's probe that question. Is it TV and movies? How many hours of instruction does the electronic mass media give them each day?

Is it school? Do we know what is going on in the classroom? Are there any philosophies we need to combat?

Is it peers? Do we realize that as our children grow older the stronger this influence becomes? Are we giving them a solid moral base so that wise decisions become natural during their teen years?

Is it the Lord? How much time and effort do we spend to make sure our children know that a relationship with the Lord is the basis for security, peace, and contentment?

We can't do what Hannah did. But we can turn them over to God through our instruction and example. Who gets our kids? God SHOULD. -- J D Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Speak the truth to these your precious ones, For guidance tell your daughters and your sons Of One who loves them even more than you And He will be their guide a lifetime through. -- Anon.

If children are to find their way to God, parents must point the way.

1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-26

STRONG FAMILIES

"You shall teach (these words) diligently to your children." - Deuteronomy 6:7

David Williams, a football player for the Houston Oilers, gave up a week's salary to be present at the birth of his son Scot. His coach

objected, but Williams put his wife and family before his career. If he continues to demonstrate this kind of commitment to his family, then Scot too is likely to see the importance of right priorities.

In more than 40 years of ministry, I have encountered many situations in which a father put his work before his family, only to see his children rebel.

Although Eli had done much for the Lord as a priest, he failed as a parent. He waited too long to discipline his sons, and when he did try to restrain them his rebuke was so weak that they paid no attention. Eli's life ended in heartbreak because his sons didn't follow the ways of the Lord.

Even the best of parents can't be sure their children won't turn from the Lord, but the risk can be minimized. If children know their parents expect obedience and will punish disobedience, especially when discipline is fair and given in love, they are more likely to turn out well.

A strong family is one of life's most precious gifts. Let's do all we can to make ours a place where each member feels loved and respected. - H V Lugt ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Our children are a gift from God
On loan from heaven above,
To train and nourish in the Lord
And show to them His love.-- Sper

Christian homes don't just happen - they're built.

1 Samuel 3:1-10

ARE YOU LISTENING?

"Speak, for Your servant hears."-- 1 Samuel 3:10

One of the happiest memories of my childhood is that of my mother reading Bible stories to me at

bedtime. Many of them made a great impression on me, especially the incident in the life of Samuel described in 1 Samuel 3. I can still hear my mother reciting the young boy's response to the call of God: "Speak, for Your servant hears" (v. 10).

We need to be like Samuel, willing to pause in the midst of life's turmoil to hear the voice of the Lord. And we have this opportunity if we prayerfully read and study the Bible regularly. You see, God's Spirit communicates to us through the Word.

Thomas a' Kempis (1379-1471) summed it up well when he wrote:

"Blessed indeed are those ears which listen not for the voice sounding without, but for the truth teaching inwardly. Blessed are the eyes that shut to outward things but intent on things inward. Blessed are they who are glad to have time to spare for God, and who shake off all worldly hindrances. Consider these things, O my soul, and hear what the Lord your God speaks."

How long has it been since you've asked the Lord to make your heart receptive to His Word? He wants to hear you say, "Speak, Lord, I'm listening." -- R W De Haan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Speak, Lord, in the stillness,
While I wait on Thee;
Hushed my heart to listen
In expectancy.

God speaks to those who take time to listen.

1 Samuel 3:10

A Clear Call

When George Washington Carver was a student at Iowa Agricultural College (now Iowa State University), he and a friend planned to go as missionaries to Africa. But as his agricultural studies progressed, Carver, a devout Christian, began to sense a different calling from God.

When Booker T. Washington asked him to join the faculty of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, Carver made it a matter of earnest prayer. In 1896, Carver wrote to Washington: "It has been the one ideal of my life to be of the greatest good to the greatest number

of my people possible, and to this end I have been preparing myself for these many years." He pledged to do all he could through the power of Christ to better the conditions of African-Americans in the racially segregated South.

Carver's sensitive heart and willing obedience to God bring to mind the experience of Samuel. Under the guidance of Eli the priest, Samuel responded to God's voice by saying, "Speak, for Your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:10).

During a lifetime of service, the distinguished African-American scientist George Washington Carver honored God by obeying His call. He has left a rich legacy and lasting example for us all.

—David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Oh, make me, Lord, so much like Thee,
My life controlled by power divine,
That I a shining light may be
From which Thy grace may ever shine. —Robertson

A life lived for God leaves a lasting legacy.

1 Samuel 3:1-15

God Is Talking

Years ago, an annoyed senior citizen from Richmond Heights, Missouri, hung up on President Reagan, who was trying to call him. This happened not just once, but half a dozen times! He didn't believe the operator when she insisted that the White House was calling. He was so sure it was a prank that he didn't stay on the line. But the Southwestern Bell operator and a neighbor finally convinced him it was for real. As a result, the man had the privilege of chatting with President Reagan for about 15 minutes.

That incident reminded me of a call received centuries ago by a young Israelite named Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1-15). He didn't realize who was calling—even after the call was repeated. It came from one greater than a president. It was from God Himself. At first Samuel was perplexed, but when Eli told him who was trying to get through to him, he listened.

Have you ever heard the Lord speaking to you? God speaks to us today through His written Word, the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and indwells us in the person of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to hear His voice (1 Cor. 2:9-16).

God is always trying to get through to us! The important question is this: Are we taking the time to listen? —Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We need to take the time each day
To read God's Word and pray,
And listen for what He might say
To guide us on our way. --Sper

God speaks through His Word to those who listen with their heart.

1 Samuel 9:1-6

Godliman Street

Several years ago my wife and I were walking in London when we came across a road named Godliman Street. We were told that a man once lived there whose life was so saintly that his street became known as "that godly man's street." This reminded me of an Old Testament story.

Saul's father sent his son and a servant to look for some donkeys that had wandered away. The young men searched for many days but couldn't find the animals.

Saul was ready to give up and go home, but his servant pointed toward Ramah, the prophet Samuel's village, and replied, "Look now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he says surely comes to pass. So let us go there; perhaps he can show us the way that we should go" (1 Samuel 9:6).

Throughout his years and into old age, Samuel had sought friendship and fellowship with God, and his words were weighty with truth. People knew him to be a prophet of the Lord. So Saul and his servant "went to the city where the man of God was" (v.10).

Oh, that our lives would so reflect Jesus that we would leave a mark on our neighborhoods, and the memory of our godliness would linger on!—David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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Thinking It Over

How would your neighbors describe you?

For further study, read

[Why Would Anyone Want To Be Holy?](#)

The most powerful testimony is a godly life.

1 Samuel 12

Afraid Of The Dentist?

Why are so many people afraid of going to the dentist? It may be the result of a bad experience. One woman said of her childhood dentist, "I started getting upset and crying and he said, 'If you don't shut up, I'm going to slap you.'" She now drives 70 miles to The Dental Fears Clinic in Kansas City.

People who are afraid to go to God have a similar problem. Some may have been mistreated by spiritual leaders. Others may have learned unhealthy fear of God as children. Still others, overwhelmed by their sin, see only God's righteous demand for justice and miss the loving provision of His Son's sacrifice for sin.

The people in today's Bible reading (1 Samuel 12) were afraid because Samuel exposed their sin. But he also told them that God longed to forgive them.

We need to replace irrational fears with healthy ones. God's Word repeatedly assures us that the pain of going to Him is far less than the pain of avoiding Him. It also assures us that because of Jesus we can "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy" (Hebrews 4:16).

A dentist fills the holes in your teeth, but God wants to fill the holes in your heart—with Himself. Don't let your unhealthy fear stop Him.—Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The love of God is my pillow,
Soft and healing and wide;
I rest my soul in its comfort,
And in its calm I abide. —Long

Only God can fill the emptiness of an aching heart.

1 Samuel 12:16-25

When You're Unappreciated

Samuel was a Mount Everest personality who appeared when the historical landscape was monotonously flat. As God's prophet, he judged the people. Since Israel was a theocracy (ruled by God), Samuel was virtually a king. He discharged his duties with skill and dedication to both God and the people.

But the people wanted a king such as the pagan nations around them had (1 Samuel 8:5). So they asked the man of God to step aside. Samuel was hurt by their rejection. He understood the scope of their disobedience (1 Sa 12:17-19).

The prophet could have turned his back on the new king and his rebellious people. Instead he declared, "Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (v.23).

Why did Samuel say that? He knew that even as doors were being slammed in his face, another door was open to him--the door of intercessory prayer. Samuel demonstrated his godliness by the way he reacted. He was still God's man, and he would still care for God's people.

When we are snubbed by those we try to serve, we must resolve not to sin against the Lord by snubbing them in return. Instead, by God's grace, we can pray sincerely for those who may not value our best efforts. —Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

How deep does it wound you when others despise
Your labor of love? Don't despair--
It's then you must view them with Spirit-filled eyes
And love your offenders with prayer. --Gustafson

Pray for those who spitefully use you. --Jesus (Matthew 5:44)

1 Samuel 12:6-25

Adjusting Your Theory

An economist made this comment about his profession: "In most fields, if the facts don't fit the theory, you find a new theory. But an economist doesn't do that--he tries to explain away the facts."

Economists aren't the only ones who sometimes refuse to change their thinking. For example, we may live by the theory that we have no reason to be afraid of God, even though the Bible reminds us that we should fear Him (1 Samuel 12:24; Prov. 1:7).

The solution to this problem is to adjust our faulty theory to fit the facts. We must admit that there are reasons both to be afraid of the Lord and not to be afraid of Him. We should have a healthy fear of His rod of correction when we refuse to honor, obey, trust, and love Him. Yet we should not fear what He will do when we admit our sins and accept His offer of life, love, and fellowship with Christ. We should not be afraid to believe Him, to trust Him, and to cling to Him. This, I believe, is what Samuel was trying to teach God's people in today's Bible reading.

Instead of redefining the word fear, we must adjust our ideas about God to fit His revelation of Himself in Scripture. And that includes a reverent fear, which is "the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). —Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Though love for God should always move
My heart to do what's good and right,
It's wise to fear His judgments true
And stand in awe of His great might. --DJD

He who fears God has nothing else to fear.

1 Samuel 12:20

Have You Turned?

In May of 1998, the failure of a control processor on board the Galaxy IV communications satellite caused it to rotate out of position and turn away from the earth. In an instant, 40 million pagers became useless pieces of plastic. Hundreds of retail stores and scores of radio and TV stations were also affected--all because one satellite turned the wrong way.

How many people would be affected if you or I turned away from God? Few of us realize the extent of our influence, but our obedience to God is vital because of our role in the church (1 Cor. 12:12-17) and the world (1 Pet. 2:9-12).

God charged His Old Testament people to be faithful to His covenant "so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God, ... and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood" (Dt. 29:18). A New Testament writer recalled this when he said we should be careful "lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled" (Heb. 12:15).

Are you out of position today? Turn back to God. Stay in contact with Him. You never know how many lives will be influenced by your decision. —David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

THINKING IT OVER
What might cause me to turn away from God?
Is there any "root of bitterness" in my life?
Is there anything I need to confess to God right now?

True repentance turns from the wrong and returns to the right.

1 Samuel 13:1-15

Costly Consequences

I always knew that disobedience has consequences, but it came home to me forcibly in basic training during World War II. I had traveled beyond the distance allowed on my weekend pass to be with my wife Ginny, and I returned to camp late because the train had broken down. I paid for my rule-breaking—20 hours of extra duty washing pots and pans!

King Saul also learned the high cost of disobedience. He faced the prospect of fighting a huge well-equipped Philistine army with his small band of frightened and untrained followers. While waiting for Samuel to come and offer a sacrifice before going to battle, Saul became impatient and offered the sacrifice himself, even though he knew that God had given that right only to the priests. It was a costly mistake.

Saul had begun his reign with humility and compassion, and he gave God the credit (1 Samuel 11). And the prophet Samuel told him that God would have kept the kingship in his family if he had obeyed God's command (13:13-14). But that one act of disobedience changed the course of his life. From that point on, it was a sad downhill journey.

Never forget that disobedience has consequences. And some of them may be very costly.—Herbert Vander Lugt [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O help me, Lord, to be afraid
Of disobedient ways;
And may I seek what pleases You,
What gives You highest praise. —Sper

The way of obedience is the only way of blessing

Toxic Living

Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord." — 1 Samuel 13:13

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 13:7-14

Picher, Oklahoma, is no more. In mid-2009, this once-bustling town of 20,000 went out of business. In the first quarter of the 1900s, Picher was a boomtown because of its abundant lead and zinc. Workers extracted the ore, which was used to help arm the US during both World Wars.

The town faded as the ore began to run out—but the biggest problem was that while the lead and zinc brought wealth, they also brought pollution. Because nothing was done to deal with the pollution, Picher became a toxic wasteland, and the government condemned the land.

What happened to Picher can happen to people. Prosperity can look so good that it's hard to think about possible downsides. Actions that are detrimental to long-term spiritual health are accepted, and unless the problem is corrected, destruction follows. It happened to King Saul. He began as a good king, but in seeking success he failed to see the damage he was doing. Turning his back on God's commands, he acted "foolishly" (1 Sam. 13:13) and lost his kingdom (v.14).

In our attempts to find success, we need to watch out for spiritual pollution that comes when we fail to follow God's clear scriptural guidelines. Godly living always beats toxic living. By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Lord has given us commands
And told us to obey;
Our own designs are sure to fail
If we neglect His way!
—Bosch

No one can be a real success without God.

1 Samuel 14:1-15

UNLEASHING GOD'S POWER

The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. --2 Chronicles 16:9

God saw the Israelite soldiers cowering in fear before the Philistine invaders. He must not have liked what He saw. But He didn't step in to help the Israelites -- until Jonathan and his armor bearer took daring action.

God also saw the people in a mountain area of Haiti, in the early 1940s, who were living in poverty and spiritual bondage and voodooism. He didn't like what He saw. But He didn't intervene until Wallace Turnbull started living and working among them.

Wallace taught them to farm more efficiently and to read and write. He treated their diseases. And he told them about Jesus. As a result of his initial work, thousands of people in that area have become Christians. Over 40,000 children are being given a Christian education. These results came because God unleashed His power and blessed the efforts of Wallace and those who helped him.

God often unleashes His power through His people. The prophet said,

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him" (2 Chronicles 16:9).

Do you see a need that you can meet? Trust God and start doing something about it. You can be one of the people through whom God will "show Himself strong." -H V Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The power of God will be unleashed
To meet the world's needs,
If we will just step out in faith
And follow when He leads.
--Sper

If we attempt great things for God, we can expect great things from God.

Be An Armor-Bearer

Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you. — 1 Samuel 14:7

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 14:1-14

The Israelites and the Philistines were at war. While Saul relaxed under a pomegranate tree with his men, Jonathan and his armor-bearer left camp quietly to see if the Lord would work on their behalf, believing that "nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few" (1 Sam. 14:6).

Jonathan and his helper were about to cross a path between two high cliffs. Armed enemy soldiers were stationed above them on both sides. They were two men against who knows how many. When Jonathan suggested they climb up after them, the armor-bearer never flinched. "Do all that is in your heart," he told Jonathan. "I am with you, according to your heart" (v.7). So the two climbed the cliff, and with God's help they overcame the enemy (vv.8-14). We have to admire this courageous young armor-bearer. He lugged the armor up that cliff and stayed with Jonathan, following along behind and killing those Jonathan wounded.

The church needs strong leaders to face our spiritual foes, but they must not be left to face them alone. They need the help and support of everyone in the congregation—loyal "armor-bearers" like you and me who are willing to join them in battle against the "enemy of our souls." By: David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We give the help that pastors need
For burdens they must bear
When we entrust them to the Lord
And hold them up in prayer.
—D. De Haan

Leaders are their best when people get behind them.

1 Samuel 15:1-23

90-PERCENT OBEDIENCE?

"Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you." - 1 Samuel 15:23

As the father of an elementary-age boy, I think I know why God places so much emphasis on obedience. Boys can get themselves into so much difficulty so easily. I can't imagine the trouble they would get into if they weren't required to obey anyone.

Take, for instance, my rule about crossing the street. Steven knows that he's supposed to stop at the end of the driveway and look both ways -- whether he is riding his bike, rollerblading, or just chasing a ball. I expect 100-percent obedience because I know that it takes only one careless step into the street to jeopardize his safety.

When God sent Saul to attack the Amalekites for what they had done to Israel (Exodus 17:8; 1 Samuel. 15:2), He expected the king to obey Him completely. When he didn't, Saul not only failed Israel but he disappointed God. And he had to suffer the results of disobedience. As Samuel told him, God "has rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23).

The Lord, who is a perfect Father, loves us and knows what will work out best in our lives. To show that we trust Him, we need to do all we can to obey what He has told us in the Bible, His Word. He deserves our 100-percent obedience. - J. David Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Let your days be Mine to order;
Where I lead, obedient be.
Let your own desires be nothing;
Only seek to follow Me.-- Anon.

The cost of obedience is nothing compared to the cost of disobedience.

[How To Have A Revival](#)

Living a life of obedience

Complete Obedience

To obey is better than sacrifice. — 1 Samuel 15:22

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:10-29

God said David was a "man after My own heart" (Acts 13:22). Saul, on the other hand, was a man after his own heart. He insisted on doing things his way rather than God's way.

In 1 Samuel 15, the Lord instructed Saul, "Go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them" (v.3). As the instrument of God's judgment, Saul was not to let anyone or anything escape.

Did Saul obey God? No! He spared the king's life and kept the best animals and "all that was good" (v.9). When confronted by Samuel, Saul lied, made excuses, and insisted that he had obeyed the Lord (vv.20-21). He was guilty of doing what he wanted and expecting God to approve of his incomplete obedience.

We too sometimes choose not to obey the Lord completely. Then we try to justify our own sinful behavior by telling ourselves that it doesn't really matter to God, or that other Christians are far more sinful than we are. But God demands total obedience.

The Holy Spirit uses God's Word to reveal to us what the Lord wants us to do. Let's stop making excuses and honor Him with our complete obedience. By: David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O help us, Lord, to heed Your Word,
Its precepts to obey;
And give us strength to quench the urge
To do things our own way.
—Sper

Obedience neither procrastinates nor questions.

Terms Of Obedience

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. —1 Samuel 15:22

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:1-23

A tongue-in-cheek list of medical terms making the rounds includes the following definitions:

Artery: the study of paintings
Vein: conceited
Varicose: nearby
Dilate: to live long
Bacteria: back door of a cafeteria
Node: was aware of

The person who wrote that humorous list used the same vocabulary as a physician but certainly not the same dictionary!

In my daily walk with God, I'm becoming painfully aware of how often I use my own definitions instead of His. For instance, is my understanding of obedience the same as His? Do I carry out God's commands as given, or do I modify His Word to suit my preferences?

King Saul blatantly disobeyed God's instructions, then told Samuel the priest, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord" (1 Sam. 15:13). When Samuel challenged him, Saul declared his innocence (v.20). God saw it differently and removed Saul from the throne of Israel because of his willful disobedience (v.23).

When I identify myself as a citizen of God's kingdom, I must follow His definitions without tailoring them to suit my own ideas. That's obedience. —DCM By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Let your days be Mine to order;
Where I lead, obedient be.
Let your own desires be nothing;
Only seek to follow Me.
—Anon.

True obedience is on God's terms, not ours.

Rising To The Top

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit. — Philippians 2:3

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:17-30

"Lacks ambition." That is not a phrase you want to see on your performance review. When it comes to work, employees who lack ambition seldom rise to the top of an organization. Without a strong desire to achieve something, nothing is accomplished. Ambition, however, has a dark side. It often has more to do with elevating self than with accomplishing something noble for others.

This was the case with many of the kings of Israel, including the first one. Saul started out with humility, but he gradually came to consider his position as something that belonged to him. He forgot that he had a special assignment from God to lead His chosen people in a way that would show other nations the way to God. When God relieved him of duty, Saul's only concern was for himself (1 Sam. 15:30).

In a world where ambition often compels people to do whatever it takes to rise to positions of power over others, God calls His people to a new way of living. We are to do nothing out of selfish ambition (Phil. 2:3) and to lay aside the weight of sin that ensnares us (Heb. 12:1).

If you want to be someone who truly "rises up," make it your ambition to humbly love and serve God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). By: Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Rise up, O men of God!
Have done with lesser things:
Give heart and mind and soul and strength
To serve the King of kings.
—Merrill

Ambition is short-sighted if our focus is not on God.

The Slippery Slope Of Success

When you were little in your own eyes, . . . did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel? —1 Samuel 15:17

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:10-23

Among the more than 19,000 original epigrams penned by chemist and writer Dr. O. A. Battista is this wise observation: "You have reached the pinnacle of success as soon as you become uninterested in money, compliments, or publicity." Unfortunately, just the opposite often happens when something we have done is praised and rewarded. A humble heart can quickly become a swelled

head.

Just before Saul was anointed king, he saw himself as a member of an insignificant family in the smallest tribe of Israel (1 Sam. 9:21). Within a few years, however, he had erected a monument in his own honor and had become the supreme authority for his conduct (15:11-12). The prophet Samuel confronted Saul for his disobedience to God by reminding him, "When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel?" (v.17).

Self-importance is the first step down the slippery slope of what we call success. It begins when we claim credit for God-given victories and modify His commands to suit our desires.

True success is staying on God's path by following His Word and giving Him praise instead of craving it for ourselves. By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Help me, O Lord, lest my heart become proud,
For all of my talents by You are endowed;
Nothing I have can I claim as my own—
What mercy and grace in my life You have shown!
—D. De Haan

True humility credits God for every success.

Underestimating Ourselves

Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel." 1 Samuel 15:17

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 15:10–18

The young man became his team's captain. The professional sports squad was now led by a mild-mannered kid who barely needed to shave. His first press conference was underwhelming. He kept deferring to the coach and to his teammates, and mumbled clichés about just trying to do his job. The team performed poorly that season, and by the end of it the young captain had been traded. He didn't grasp that he'd been entrusted with the authority to lead, or maybe he never believed he could.

Due to his failures, Saul was "small in [his] own eyes" (1 Samuel 15:17)—which is a funny thing to say about a guy who's described as being tall. He was literally head and shoulders above the rest (9:2). And yet that wasn't how he saw himself. In fact, his actions in the chapter show him trying to win the approval of the people. He hadn't fully grasped that God—not people—had chosen him and given him a mission.

But Saul's mistake is a picture of every human being's failure: we can miss that we were made in God's image to reflect His rule, and end up misusing our authority—spreading destruction in the world. To undo this, we need to return to God: to let the Father define us by His love, to let Him fill us with the Spirit, and to let Jesus send us out into the world. By: Glenn Packiam

What assignment has God given you that you don't think you have the power to do? Why is it vital to have your identity based in what God says is true?

Dear Father, give me eyes to see myself as You see me, and grant me the grace to faithfully carry out the calling You've entrusted to me.

Obedience Is Worship

To obey is better than sacrifice. — 1 Samuel 15:22

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:13-23

While I was traveling with a chorale from a Christian high school, it was great to see the students praise God as they led in worship in the churches we visited. What happened away from church was even better to see. One day the group discovered that a woman had no money for gas—and they spontaneously felt led by God to take up a collection. They were able to give her enough money for several tankfuls of gas.

It's one thing to worship and praise God at church; it's quite another to move out into the real world and worship Him through daily obedience.

The students' example causes us to think about our own lives. Do we confine our worship to church? Or do we continue to worship

Him by obeying Him in our daily life, looking for opportunities to serve?

In 1 Samuel 15 we see that Saul was asked by the Lord to do a task; but when we review what he did (vv.20-21), we discover that he used worship (sacrifice) as an excuse for his failure to obey God. God's response was, "To obey is better than sacrifice" (v.22).

It's good to be involved in worship at church. But let's also ask God to show us ways to continue to give Him the praise He deserves through our obedience. By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, I want my worship of You to extend beyond the walls of my church. Help me to listen to Your prompting and to serve others wherever I can—no matter what day it is.

Our worship should not be confined to times and places; it should be the spirit of our lives.

"I Will Be Good"

Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? —1 Samuel 15:19

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:10-23

When Queen Victoria was a child, she didn't realize that she was in line for the throne of England. Her instructors, trying to prepare her for the future, were frustrated because they couldn't motivate her. She just didn't take her studies seriously. Finally, her teachers decided to tell her that one day she would become the queen of England. Upon hearing this, Victoria quietly said, "Then I will be good." The realization that she had inherited this high calling gave her a sense of responsibility that profoundly affected her conduct from that day forward.

Our Scripture reading for today tells how Saul had been chosen from among the people of Israel as their anointed king (1 Samuel 15:17). Almighty God had honored him greatly in giving him this position as leader of His special nation. But Saul didn't think about the kind of attitude that should accompany his high calling. If he had, he would not have pounced on the loot of battle as if he were the leader of an outlaw band (v.19).

As believers, we are children of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16-17). We have a noble calling. Let's always keep in mind who we are. This will help us to say, as young Victoria said, "I will be good." By: Herbert Vander Lugt

O Lord, you see what's in my heart,
There's nothing hid from You;
So help me live the kind of life
That's honest, good, and true.
—D. De Haan

A child of the King will want to display the manners of the court.

1 Samuel 15:10-23

Unexpected Costs

According to The Blunder Book by M. Hirsh Goldberg, the company that won the bid to construct the 100 miles of track for the Washington, DC, subway system projected the cost to be \$793 million. When the job was completed, however, it cost \$6.6 billion. Goldberg said the same company that built the subway received a contract to build the Saudi Arabian city of Jubail. The initial estimate was \$9 billion. But when the project was finished, the bill came to \$45 billion. That's a cost overrun of \$36 billion!

These unexpected construction expenses are of little significance, however, compared with the unexpected costs of our sins against God. The life of King Saul shows us the enormous price of disobedience. He never figured that his continued willfulness and stubborn pride would eventually cost him his honor, his family, his friends, his influence for good, and his fellowship with God. He lost it all. He failed to see it coming when he decided to keep a few bleating sheep for his own pleasure and spare a wicked monarch (1 Samuel 15:14-15, 20-21). But these were costly acts of disobedience.

Father, help us to count the inevitable cost of failing to trust You today. And help us to remember the enormous price Christ paid on the cross for us. —Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Sin's pleasures have such great appeal,
They always look like bargains rare;

But seldom do we clearly see
The hidden costs that we must bear. —D. De Haan

Sin adds to your trouble, subtracts from your energy, and multiplies your difficulties.

1 Samuel 15:13-23

Got Moles?

While cutting our grass, I spotted rounded mounds of sandy loam on what had recently been a smooth lawn. A family of moles had emigrated from nearby woods to take up residence beneath our yard. The little creatures were wreaking havoc with our lawn by burrowing into the soil and disrupting the beautiful turf.

In some ways the activity of moles illustrates the dark side of the human heart. On the surface, we may appear polished and polite. But greed, lust, bigotry, and addictions can work inner destruction. Sooner or later, those sins will become apparent.

King Saul had a fatal flaw that festered beneath the surface—rebellion against God. He had been commanded not to take any of the spoils of war from the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:3). But after a decisive victory, he let the Israelites keep the best of the livestock for themselves (v.9).

When the prophet Samuel confronted the king, Saul rationalized that he had kept the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to God. But this was a mere cover for his sinful pride, which had erupted in defiance of the God he claimed to serve.

God's remedy for rebellion is confession and repentance. Like Saul, you may be rationalizing your sin. Confess and forsake it before it's too late.—Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God wants complete obedience—
Excuses will not do;
His Word and Spirit point the way
As we His will pursue. —Sper

One sin becomes two when it is defended.

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Looks And Life

During the first few hours of their 30th college reunion, Mary Schmich and her friends talked mostly about how old their classmates looked. But as the event progressed, their focus began to change. Later, in her Chicago Tribune column, Mary wrote: "Once you get used to the fact that time has robbed every single one of you of something—or added it in the wrong places ... you stop thinking about looks [and] start talking about life."

So much of our time and attention are devoted to physical appearance that it's easy to consider it the most important aspect of our lives. But the Bible reminds us that God wants us to see ourselves and others differently.

When the Lord sent Samuel to anoint a new king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:1), God reminded him to look deeper than physical characteristics: "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature ... For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (v.7).

God's Word has some harsh condemnation for those who show favoritism based on appearances (James 2:1-2). When we begin to see people through God's eyes, our focus will change from looks to life. —David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God looks not at the outward form
But what is in the heart;
The beauty He is pleased to see,
His Spirit can impart. —Hess

**Our mirrors reflect the outward appearance;
God's mirror reveals the inward condition.**

1 Samuel 16:7

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." - 1 Samuel 16:7

How often are we guilty of leaving God out of our decision-making? Sometimes when we're faced with a choice, the right answer may seem obvious to us and those around us. But if we fail to ask the Lord to help us get to the heart of the matter, we might jump to a wrong conclusion.

That's what Samuel did when he set out to anoint Israel's next king. When he was Eliab, Jesse's oldest son, Samuel was sure he had his man. Wrong! In fact, God chose the least likely of Jesse's sons, the youthful David. He was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), but Samuel saw only the outward appearance.

Including God in decision-making is a vital principle for churches too. When seeking a new pastor or someone to lead a church ministry, we're tempted to look only at externals. We're concerned with such things as speaking skills, friendliness, and ability to inspire -- and we should be. But if we haven't asked God to get us past appearances to the heart, we haven't looked deep enough. We can't read hearts, but the Lord can. He knows when someone is closely following Him.

As you make your decisions today, be sure to include God. - D C Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Not mine -- not mine the choice,
In things both great and small,
Be Thou my Guide, my Strength,
My Wisdom, and my All.-- Bonar

If you don't want to end in failure, be sure to begin with God.

1 Samuel 16:1-7

Dumb Ox"

When Thomas Aquinas began to attend classes at the University of Paris in the 13th century, he seldom spoke up in class. His fellow students thought that his silence meant he wasn't very smart, so they nicknamed him "the dumb ox."

His peers must have been surprised when he excelled in his studies and went on to write great works of theology still in use today. Thomas Aquinas was a misjudged genius.

How could his classmates have been so wrong? They judged him only by his outward appearance. They didn't really know what he was like on the inside.

God had told the prophet Samuel to anoint a new king to rule His people Israel. David the shepherd boy did not appear to be kingly material. His youthfulness did not measure up to the age and stature of his older brother Eliab (1 Samuel 16:6). Yet the Lord corrected Samuel's original perception (1 Samuel 16:7). David would go on to become a great warrior and the Lord's chosen ruler of His people (1 Samuel 13:14; 18:8; 2 Samuel 7:1-17).

When you are tempted to judge someone by his outward appearance, remember Thomas Aquinas and King David. The heart is what matters to God. —Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

First impressions can mislead us,
For we do not know the heart;
We can often be mistaken,
Since we only know in part. —Fitzhugh

The true measure of a person is what's in the heart.

Life's Surprises

The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.
—1 Samuel 16:7

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-7

No one watching Britain's Got Talent (a popular televised talent show) expected much when mobile phone salesman Paul Potts took

the stage. The judges looked skeptically at one another when the nervous, unassuming, ordinary-looking chap announced he would sing opera—until Potts opened his mouth.

He began to sing Puccini's "Nessun Dorma"—and it was magical! The crowd roared and stood in amazement while the judges sat stunned in tearful silence. It was one of the greatest surprises any such television program has ever had, in large part because it came wrapped in such an ordinary package.

In the Old Testament, the rescuer of Israel arrived at the battlefield in a most unlikely form—a young shepherd boy (1 Sam. 17). King Saul and his entire army were surprised when David defeated Goliath and won the day. They needed to learn the way that God looks at people. He said to the prophet Samuel, "The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (16:7).

If we judge others only by their outer appearance, we might miss the wonderful surprise of what's in their heart. By: Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O Lord, we are so quick to judge,
Though much is veiled from sight;
Lord, may we see how just You are
To guide us in what's right. —D. De Haan

It's what's in the heart that counts.

Last Tree On The Lot

Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. — 1 Samuel 16:7

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Have you ever wondered what it would feel like to be the last tree on the lot on Christmas Eve? People have passed you by because you were the wrong size or had gnarled branches or a poor shape or your needles were falling.

Perhaps you feel like a rejected Christmas tree. You don't quite measure up to people's expectations. You think nobody wants you.

There's good news. God doesn't look at you the way people do. He looks at your heart.

When the prophet Samuel was looking for a person who was qualified to be the next king of Israel, Jesse paraded his seven oldest sons in front of him. But the Lord had not chosen any of them. Samuel told Jesse, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (v.7).

Jesse's youngest son was out tending the sheep. He wasn't even being considered. Yet when Samuel found young David, he anointed him as the one to succeed Saul as king of Israel. The Lord saw in David "a man after My own heart, who will do all My will" (Acts 13:22).

Today, as back in David's time, the Lord is looking for a heart that is willing to serve Him. What does He see when He looks at you? By: Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

That I may love Him is my soul's ambition—
Love Him with all my mind and strength and heart,
Seek out His will and choose it, in submission,
And with the joy He only can impart. —Anon.

To have a heart for God, give God your heart.

An Inside View

The Lord looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 16:1-7

Retired physicist Arie van't Riet creates works of art in an unusual way. He arranges plants and deceased animals in various compositions and then x-rays them. He scans the developed x-rays into a computer and then adds color to certain parts of his pictures. His artwork reveals the inner complexity of flowers, fish, birds, reptiles, and monkeys.

An inside view of something is often more fascinating and more significant than an exterior view. At first glance, Samuel thought

Eliab looked like he could be Israel's next king (1 Sam. 16:6). But God warned Samuel not to look at Eliab's physical traits. He told Samuel, "People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (v. 7). God chose David, instead of Eliab, to be Israel's next king.

When God looks at us, He is more interested in our hearts than our height, the state of our soul than the structure of our face. He doesn't see us as too old, too young, too small, or too big. He zeroes in on the things that matter—our response to His love for us and our concern for other people (Matt. 22:37-39). Second Chronicles 6:30 says that God alone knows the human heart. When the God who has done so much for us looks at our heart, what does He see? By: Jennifer Benson Schuldt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Dear God, help me to value what You value. As I follow Your example, I pray that You will be pleased with what You see in my heart.

The true measure of a person is what's in the heart.

Best In Show?

Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. — 1 Samuel 16:7

Today's Scripture: Matthew 23:1-12

Dog shows on TV can be entertaining. The dog owners are impeccably dressed and trot along with their pedigreed pooches as they show off their unique canine beauty. The dogs have been trained to stand confidently with chins lifted high, their shiny coats carefully brushed and styled. To me, they all look like winners.

But I wonder sometimes, when their audience is gone, what are these dogs really like? Do they ever relax and let their sleek fur get so matted they're mistaken for mutts? Does their doggie breath start smelling foul?

More important, what are we really like when nobody's watching? In Matthew 23:2-7, Jesus rebuked those who were interested in how they looked in public rather than how they were seen by God. He wants us to be obedient, faithful, and committed to Him—even when nobody else sees. The Pharisees focused on the way they were perceived by other people. God's focus is on what we're like inside. His desire is for us to look like His Son.

We're not in a competition with other Christians. God will never ask us to compete for "best in show." He measures us by the perfect standard of His Son (Eph. 4:13). And in love, He provides the righteousness we need so that we can be blameless before Him (Col. 1:21-23). By: Cindy Hess Kasper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Just live your life before your Lord,
It matters not what others do—
Your actions will be weighed by Him
Who metes out judgment just and true.
—Roe

Living for God's approval is better than living for man's applause.

First Impressions

For man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. — 1 Samuel 16:7

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-7

As I shopped for groceries one day, I was perceived as a thief by one person and a hero by another.

As I exited the supermarket, an employee said, "Excuse me, Sir. There are too many unbagged items in your cart." This is evidently a strategy used by shoplifters. When he saw that they were products too big to be bagged, he apologized and sent me on my way.

In the parking lot, a woman glanced at my gold embroidered sportsman's cap. Mistaking it for a military hat, she said, "Thank you for defending our country!" Then she walked away.

The supermarket employee and the woman in the parking lot had each formed hasty conclusions about me. It's easy to form opinions of others based on first impressions.

When Samuel was to select the next king of Israel from the sons of Jesse, he too made a judgment based on first impressions. However, God's chosen was not any of the older sons. The Spirit told Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature" (1 Sam. 16:7). God chose David, the youngest, who looked least like a king.

God can help us view people through His eyes, for “the Lord does not see as man sees; . . . the Lord looks at the heart” (v.7).
By: Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If we could view through eyes of faith
The people we meet each day
We'd quickly see God's gracious hand
In all who come our way. —D. DeHaan

First impressions can often lead to wrong conclusions.

Beautiful People

The Lord does not see as man sees; . . . the Lord looks at the heart. — 1 Samuel 16:7

Today's Scripture: 1 Peter 3:1-6

Nowhere in Scripture are we told to value people on the basis of how they look. We shouldn't measure people's worth by whether they are good-looking, have beautiful hair and trim bodies, or dress in the finest clothes.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not advocating greasy hair, flabby frames, or drab dress. Nor am I saying that beauty is a vice. But I'm concerned about my own superficial values. I'm prone to judge people by the bone structure in their faces or by the clothes they wear. It's easy to show partiality to someone who looks sharp and wears the latest fashions. Rather than making it my goal to see as God sees, I tend to respond to the physical, skin-level qualities of a person.

A person's real worth lies far beneath the surface. The Bible tells us, “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). It is “the hidden person of the heart” that God values (1 Peter 3:4).

People don't have to be physically attractive to acknowledge God in all their ways, or to be unselfish, merciful, and compassionate. It doesn't take a model's face to develop self-control, patience, wisdom, and courage. These are the qualities of truly beautiful people. By: Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Beautiful lives are those that bear
For other lives their load of care;
Beautiful souls are those who show
The love of Christ where'er they go. —Anon.

Nothing is more attractive than Christlikeness.

Plausible Deniability

The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.
— 1 Samuel 16:7

Today's Scripture: Psalm 51:1-10

Answering media charges of scandal and impropriety, the guilty politician responded with the plea, “I have no recollection of those events.” It was yet another attempt of a public figure to apply a strategy called “plausible deniability.” This is when individuals try to create a personal safety net for themselves by seeking to convince others that they had no knowledge of the events in question. Someone else gets blamed and becomes the scapegoat for the guilty person's wrongs.

Sometimes Christians have their own kind of plausible deniability. We claim ignorance of our wrong behavior, rationalize, or blame others—but God knows the truth. The Bible tells us: “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). This is true whether the heart is pure or if it's a corrupt heart robed in false claims of innocence. We may fool others who see us only on the outside, but God sees the reality of our hearts—whether good or bad.

It is wise, therefore, to humbly confess our faults to the Lord. He desires that we admit the truth (Ps. 51:6). The only way to escape the sin and restore our fellowship with God is to acknowledge and confess it to Him (vv.3-4). By: Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Dear Lord, be merciful to me;
My sin has grieved Your heart;
And strengthen my resolve, O Lord,
From evil to depart. —D. De Haan

We may successfully fool others, but God knows our hearts.

Life's Surprises

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Though much is veiled from sight;
Lord, may we see how just You are
To guide us in what's right. —D. De Haan

It's what's in the heart that counts.

An Ordinary Man

People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 16:1–7

William Carey was a sickly boy, born to a humble family near Northampton, England. His future didn't look too bright. But God had plans for him. Against all odds, he moved to India, where he brought incredible social reforms and translated the Bible into several Indian languages. He loved God and people, and accomplished many things for God.

David, son of Jesse, was an ordinary young man, the youngest in his family. He was seemingly an insignificant shepherd on the hills of Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16:11–12). Yet God saw David's heart and had a plan for him. King Saul had been rejected by God for disobedience. While the prophet Samuel mourned Saul's choices, God called Samuel to anoint a different king, one of Jesse's sons.

When Samuel saw the handsome, tall Eliab, he naturally thought, "surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord" (v. 6). However, God's strategy to select a king was much different than Samuel's. In fact, God said no to each of Jesse's sons, except the youngest one. Selecting David as king was definitely not a strategic move from God's part, or so it seemed at first glance. What would a young shepherd have to offer his community, let alone his country?

How comforting to know that the Lord knows our hearts and has His plans for us. By: Estera Piroasca Escobar ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Dear Lord, thank You that You care more about my heart's attitude toward You than my outward beauty, possessions, or achievements.

Welcome to Estera Piroasca Escobar! Meet all our authors at odb.org/all-authors.

God's priority is your heart.

Welcome To All!

Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. —1 Samuel 16:7

Today's Scripture: Isaiah 55:1-9

A beautifying project on the main road of my town prompted the demolition of a church built in the 1930s. Although the windows of the empty church had been removed, the doors remained in place for several days, even as bulldozers began knocking down walls. Each set of doors around the church building held a message written in giant, fluorescent-orange block letters: KEEP OUT!

Unfortunately, some churches whose doors are open convey that same message to visitors whose appearance doesn't measure up to their standards. No fluorescent, giant-size letters needed. With a single disapproving glance, some people communicate: "You're Not Welcome Here!"

How people look on the outside, of course, is not an indicator of what is in their hearts. God's focus is on the inner life of people. He looks far below the surface of someone's appearance (1 Sam. 16:7) and that's what He desires for us to do as well. He also knows the hearts of those who appear to be "righteous" but are "full of hypocrisy" on the inside (Matt. 23:28).

God's message of welcome, which we are to show to others, is clear. He says to all who seek Him: "Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters" (Isa. 55:1). By: Cindy Hess Kasper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thank You, Lord, that You welcome all into
Your family, and You have welcomed me. Show me
how to be as accepting of others as You are.
May I reveal Your heart of love.

No one will know what you mean when you say, "God is love"—unless you show it.

Hidden Beauty

People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 16:1–7

Our children needed a little coaxing to believe that it was worth putting on snorkeling gear to peer beneath the surface of the Caribbean Sea off the shore of the island of Tobago. But after they dove in, they resurfaced ecstatic, "There are thousands of fish of all different kinds! It's so beautiful! I've never seen such colorful fish!"

Because the surface of the water looked similar to freshwater lakes near our home, our children could have missed the beauty hidden just below the surface.

When the prophet Samuel went to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be the next king, Samuel saw the oldest son, Eliab, and was impressed by his appearance. The prophet thought he had found the right man, but the Lord rejected Eliab. God reminded Samuel that He "does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

So Samuel asked if there were more sons. The youngest boy wasn't present but caring for the family's sheep. This son, David, was summoned and the Lord directed Samuel to anoint him.

Often we look at people only on a surface level and don't always take the time to see their inner, sometimes hidden, beauty. We don't always value what God values. But if we take the time to peer beneath the surface, we may find great treasure. By: Lisa M. Samra ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Heavenly Father, thank You for not valuing people based on outward appearances but instead by looking at our hearts. Help me to take the time to see beyond simply what my eyes can see in order to discover true and lasting beauty.

God can help me to see the inner beauty in others.

Looks And Life

Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. — 1 Samuel 16:7

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

During the first few hours of their 30th college reunion, Mary Schmich and her friends talked mostly about how old their classmates looked. But as the event progressed, their focus began to change. Later, in her Chicago Tribune column, Mary wrote: "Once you get used to the fact that time has robbed every single one of you of something—or added it in the wrong places . . . you stop thinking

about looks [and] start talking about life.”

So much of our time and attention are devoted to physical appearance that it's easy to consider it the most important aspect of our lives. But the Bible reminds us that God wants us to see ourselves and others differently.

When the Lord sent Samuel to anoint a new king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:1), God reminded him to look deeper than physical characteristics: “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature . . . For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (v.7).

God's Word has some harsh condemnation for those who show favoritism based on appearances (James 2:1-2). When we begin to see people through God's eyes, our focus will change from looks to life. By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God looks not at the outward form
But what is in the heart;
The beauty He is pleased to see,
His Spirit can impart. —Hess

Our mirrors reflect the outward appearance;
God's mirror reveals the inward condition.

Looking Good

Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. — 1 Samuel 16:7

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

To a greater or lesser degree, all of us have something about our looks that we don't like. When we become preoccupied with it, though, there's a fancy name for it: Body Dysmorphic Disorder. It afflicts people who are so dissatisfied with their appearance that they have a difficult time functioning normally.

Although we can all find something about ourselves we would like to change, here are a couple of biblical truths to help us be satisfied with the way we are put together.

First, we have this comforting assurance: “The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). God is far more concerned with how our heart looks than how we look in the mirror.

Second, Psalm 139 reminds us that God formed us (vv.15-16) and that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (v.14). God made us the way we are for a reason, and that should give us reason to thank Him.

What's most important is our relationship with the Lord. If our heart has been cleansed from sin through faith in Jesus and we're becoming more Christlike in character, in God's eyes we're looking good! By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God looks not on the outward form
But what is in the heart;
The beauty He is pleased to see,
His Spirit can impart.
—Hess

Righteousness in the heart can make any life beautiful.

Amani

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. — 2 Timothy 1:7

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:14-23

Amani, which means “peace” in Swahili, is the name of a Labrador retriever pup that has some special friends. Amani lives with two young cheetahs at the Dallas Zoo. Zoologists placed the animals together so the cheetahs could learn Amani's relaxed ways. Since dogs are generally at ease in public settings, the experts predict that Amani will be a “calming influence” in the cheetahs' lives as they grow up together.

David was a soothing influence in King Saul's life when a “distressing spirit” troubled him (1 Sam. 16:14). When Saul's servants learned of his problem, they thought music might ease his affliction. One servant summoned David, who was a skilled harpist.

Whenever the king became troubled, David would play the harp. “Then Saul would become refreshed and well” (v.23).

We crave refreshment and well-being when we are plagued by anger, fear, or sadness. The God of the Bible is a “God of peace” (Heb. 13:20-21), One who gives His Holy Spirit to everyone who believes in Him. When we’re agitated or anxious, we can remember that God’s Spirit produces power, love, and self-control (2 Tim. 1:7). God’s influence in our lives can create a calming effect—one that leads to comfort and wholeness. By: Jennifer Benson Schuldt

We’re grateful, Father, for the peace that You offer for our hearts. Nothing has the power to take that away. Thank You that Your peace has come to stay.

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.” —Jesus

Overcoming Fear

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. Psalm 20:7

Today’s Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 17:4–7, 45–50

Fear ruled a man’s life for thirty-two years. Afraid of being caught for his crimes, he hid at his sister’s farmhouse, going nowhere and visiting no one, even missing his mother’s funeral. When he was sixty-four, he learned that no charges had ever been filed against him. The man was free to resume a normal life. Yes, the threat of punishment was real, but he allowed the fear of it to control him.

Likewise, fear ruled the Israelites when the Philistines challenged them at the Valley of Elah. The threat was real. Their enemy Goliath was 9 feet 9 inches tall and his body armor alone weighed 125 pounds (1 Samuel 17:4–5). For forty days, every morning and evening, Goliath challenged the Israelite army to fight him. But no one dared come forward. No one until David visited the battle lines. He heard and saw the taunting, and volunteered to fight Goliath.

While everyone in the Israelite army thought Goliath was too big to fight, David the shepherd boy knew he wasn’t too big for God. He said, “the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s” (v. 47).

When we’re gripped by fear, let’s follow David’s example and fix our eyes on God to gain a right perspective of the problem. The threat may be real, but the One who is with us and for us is bigger than that which is against us. By: Albert Lee ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What giant battle are you facing that’s crippling you in fear? How can you intentionally fix your eyes on the living God?

Thank You, God, that You’re bigger than any other giant in my life. I trust You.

Trust Your Armor

Go, and the Lord be with you. 1 Samuel 17:37

Today’s Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 17:34–39

As a young writer I was often unsure of myself when I was in writing workshops. I would look around and see rooms filled with giants, if you will—people with formal training or years of experience. I had neither. But what I did have was an ear formed by the language and tone and cadences of the King James Version of the Bible. It was very much my armor, so to speak, what I was used to, and allowing it to inform my writing style and voice has become a joy to me, and I hope to others.

We don’t get the impression that David the young shepherd was unsure of himself when it came to wearing Saul’s armor to fight Goliath (1 Samuel 17:38–39). He simply couldn’t move around in it. David realized one man’s armor can be another man’s prison—“I cannot go in these” (v. 39). So he trusted what he knew. God had prepared him for that moment with just what was needed (vv. 34–35). The sling and stones were what David was used to, his armor, and God used them to bring joy to the ranks of Israel that day.

Have you ever felt unsure of yourself, thinking If I just had what someone else has, then my life would be different? Consider the gifts or experiences God has given specifically to you. Trust your God-given armor. By: John Blase ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What’s an example of someone else’s armor that’s been a matter of comparison or even jealousy for you? How might your armor be just what’s needed for this day?

Sovereign God, at times it’s easy to feel unsure of myself, especially in situations where challenges feel like

giants. Help me to trust that You've given me just what I need. You've crafted my life's story.

Fleeing from Turkeys

David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 1 Samuel 17:48

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 17:32, 40–50

Two wild turkeys stood in the country lane ahead. How close could I get? I wondered. I slowed my jog to a walk, then stopped. It worked. The turkeys walked toward me . . . and kept coming. In seconds, their heads were bobbing at my waist, then behind me. How sharp were those beaks? I ran away. They waddled after me before giving up the chase.

How quickly the tables had turned! The hunted had become the hunter when the turkeys seized the initiative. Foolishly, I had wondered if they were too dumb to be scared. I wasn't about to be carelessly wounded by a bird, so I fled. From turkeys.

David didn't seem dangerous, so Goliath taunted him to come near. " 'Come here,' he said, 'and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!' " (1 Samuel 17:44). David flipped the script when he seized the initiative. He ran toward Goliath, not because he was foolish but because he had confidence in God. He shouted, "This very day . . . the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel" (v. 46). Goliath was puzzled by this aggressive boy. What's going on? he must have thought. Then it hit him. Right between the eyes.

It's natural for small animals to run from people and shepherds to avoid giants. It's natural for us to hide from our problems. Why settle for natural? Is there a God in Israel? Then, in His power, run toward the fight. By: Mike Wittmer ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What problem or person are you avoiding? How might you express confidence in God?

Father, whenever I'm afraid, remind me that Your Spirit is in me. Help me run in Your strength.

GIANT KILLERS

You come to me with a sword, with a spear and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts. —1 Samuel 17:45

One of the more disheartening Football World Cup statistics belongs to Ernst Willimowski of Poland. He managed to score four goals against Brazil in the 1938 tournament, yet his team still lost 5-6! Willimowski, even though he excelled, could not help Poland beat the giants of football. Poland just wasn't good enough, no matter what their star did.

The story of David and Goliath could have easily turned out this way! Goliath was a huge man with a huge spear, who challenged Israel on behalf of his nation, the Philistines.

No matter how hard David trained or how well he performed in the battle, he could never be a match for the giant. The reason that David beat this man-mountain is explained in his exclamation to his fellow Israelites: "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Sam. 17:26). David recognized that his God was the living God who is active, mighty and able to do all things. In serving God, David knew no one could defeat him.

Like David, and like Willimowski, we might not have the strength to take on this life's challenges on our own, but we can trust in the living God whom nothing and no one can stand against. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

ALL CIRCUMSTANCES BELONG TO GOD!

Mighty

[Goliath] looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy. 1 Samuel 17:42

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 17:32, 41–47

Baby Saybie, born as a "micro-preemie" at 23 weeks, weighed only 8.6 ounces. Doctors doubted Saybie would live and told her parents they'd likely have only an hour with their daughter. However, Saybie kept fighting. A pink card near her crib declared "Tiny but Mighty." After five months in the hospital, Saybie miraculously went home as a healthy five-pound baby. And she took a world record with her: the world's tiniest surviving baby.

It's powerful to hear stories of those who beat the odds. The Bible tells one of these stories. David, a shepherd boy, volunteered to fight Goliath—a mammoth warrior who defamed God and threatened Israel. King Saul thought David was ridiculous: "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth" (1 Samuel

17:33). And when the boy David stepped onto the battlefield, Goliath “looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy” (v. 42). However, David didn’t step into battle alone. He came “in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel” (v. 45). And when the day was done, a victorious David stood above a dead Goliath.

No matter how enormous the problem, when God is with us there’s nothing that we need to fear. With His strength, we’re also mighty. By: Winn Collier ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When do you feel small and insignificant? How can you see God present with you and strengthening you despite insurmountable odds?

God, I feel tiny today. Left to myself, there’s no way forward. But I trust You to be with me and guide me. I’m trusting in Your strength.

1 Samuel 17:37 Are You Being Prepared?

The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and . . . the bear will rescue me. 1 Samuel 17:37

Today’s Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 17:8, 32–37, 48–50

I worked at a fast-food restaurant for over two years in high school. Some aspects of the job were difficult. Customers verbalized their anger while I apologized for the unwanted slice of cheese on the sandwich I didn’t make. Soon after I left, I applied for a computer job at my university. The employers were more interested in my fast-food experience than my computer skills. They wanted to know that I knew how to deal with people. My experience in unpleasant circumstances prepared me for a better job!

Young David persevered through an experience we might well call unpleasant. When Israel was challenged to send someone to fight Goliath, no one was brave enough to step up to the task. No one but David. King Saul was reluctant to send him to fight, but David explained that as a shepherd he had fought and killed a lion and a bear for the sake of the sheep (1 Sam. 17:34–36). Confidently he stated, “The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and . . . the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine” (v. 37).

Being a shepherd didn’t earn David much respect, but it prepared him to fight Goliath and eventually become Israel’s greatest king. We may be in difficult circumstances, but through them God might be preparing us for something greater! By: Julie Schwab ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, help me to hold on during the unpleasant times in my life knowing that You may be preparing me for something greater.

God uses present circumstances to prepare us for the future.

The Small Giant

The Lord . . . will deliver me. —1 Samuel 17:37

Today’s Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 17:32-37

The towering enemy strides into the Valley of Elah. He stands 9 feet tall, and his coat of armor, made of many small bronze plates, glimmers in the sunlight. The shaft of his spear is wrapped with cords so it can spin through the air and be thrown with greater distance and accuracy. Goliath looks invincible.

But David knows better. While Goliath may look like a giant and act like a giant, in contrast to the living God he is small. David has a right view of God and therefore a right view of the circumstances. He sees Goliath as one who is defying the armies of the living God (1 Sam. 17:26). He confidently appears before Goliath in his shepherd’s clothes, armed with only his staff, five stones, and a sling. His confidence is not in what he has but in who is with him (v.45).

What “Goliath” are you facing right now? It may be an impossible situation at work, a financial difficulty, or a broken relationship. With God all things are small in comparison. Nothing is too big for Him. The words of the hymn writer Charles Wesley remind us: “Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, and looks to that alone; laughs at impossibilities, and cries it shall be done.” God is able to deliver you if that’s His desire, and He may do so in ways you don’t expect. By: Poh Fang Chia ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Not to the strong is the battle,
Not to the swift is the race;
Yet to the true and the faithful
Victory is promised through grace.

—Crosby

Don't tell God how big your giants are. Tell your giants how big your God is.

E-Mail Challenge

I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts . . . whom you have defied. —1 Samuel 17:45

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:31-58

It came to me as a two-sentence e-mail from Norway: "I think that Jesus Christ never existed, and I believe we are from monkeys! You are stupid to believe in Jesus."

I believe this anonymous scoffer represents a growing number of people who not only reject Christ but are closed to the facts that support belief in God and creation. They are unwilling to consider the evidence.

How do we witness to such a person? How do we present Christ to someone who won't even listen to us? In his book Foolishness to the Greeks, Lesslie Newbigin suggests that we need to have the courage to "hold and proclaim a belief that cannot be proved to be true" by the world's standards.

That's what David was doing when he said that with God's help he could defeat Goliath (1 Sam. 17:45-47). He believed what could not be proven at that moment. He may have sounded foolish to the skeptics around him, but he knew that the One he served would show Himself to be the true and living God.

In response to the skeptics, we can affirm our confidence in the Bible's uncompromising truths. And we can echo David's words: "O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me" (Ps. 25:2). By: David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The skeptic questions, doubts, and scoffs,
Protesting truths we hold so dear;
But God's Word stands, its truth remains,
Proclaiming what we need to hear.

—K. De Haan

The evidence for God is clear to the one who is looking for Him.

1 Samuel 17:31-50 CHRIST OUR CHAMPION

"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." - 1 Corinthians 15:57

If ever anyone needed a champion, the Israelites did. As their army camped in the Valley of Elah, they were held at bay and embarrassed daily by the tauntings of the Philistine strongman Goliath.

David, the young shepherd son of Jesse, had brought provisions for his brothers in the army. When he heard Goliath mocking the Israelites, he was furious and asked for permission to go out and fight him. David was confident that the God who had delivered him from the lion and the bear (1 Samuel 17:34-37) would give him victory over the giant -- and He did.

David's conquest reminds us of Jesus Christ's victory. We were hopelessly enslaved by sin and needed a champion. Then God sent His Son Jesus to deliver us. He came to earth as a man, faced all our human trials (Heb. 2:14-15), and went to battle on our behalf. In His death and resurrection, Jesus

won complete victory over sin and death (1 Cor. 15:54-57). What's more, His triumph guarantees us victory in our daily walk with God.

But we can't expect success in our own strength. We must rely on the Holy Spirit's power and guidance. Then, as we walk with God in faith, we can more fully appreciate the victory our Champion has brought us -- D C Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I will praise my dear Redeemer,
His triumphant power I'll tell,
How the victory He giveth
Over sin and death and hell.-- Bliss

No matter what giants we face, we can win by God's grace.

Triumphing Over Giants

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. — 1 Samuel 17:37

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:33-50

In 1935, the debate team of Wiley College, a small and unranked black school in Texas, unexpectedly defeated the all-white championship team from the University of Southern California. This was a classic case of the unknown triumphing over a national giant. (ED: THIS WAS MADE INTO A MOVIE [The Great Debaters](#) - IF YOU WANT AN ENTERTAINING MOVIE WATCH IT!)

When ancient Israel was in peril at the hands of the Philistines, there was a boy named David who actually triumphed over a giant (1 Sam. 17). The armies were drawn up on opposite sides of the Valley of Elah. They were probably afraid of one another and decided that the outcome of the battle should be determined by a battle of champions. The Philistines offered Goliath, a giant (about 9'9"), but Israel could not find anyone who was worthy or brave enough to fight. David heard of the dilemma and appealed to Saul to let him fight Goliath (vv.32-37). Saul was reluctant, but he agreed. David, armed with five smooth stones (v.40) and unswerving faith in the Almighty God (v.45), triumphed over the Philistines' national champion.

We all face giants in our lives—worry, doubt, fear, sin, and guilt. But with limited and unlikely resources and unswerving confidence in our all-powerful God, we too can triumph over them. By: Marvin Williams ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Come, Lord, and give me courage—
Thy conquering Spirit give;
Make me an overcomer
In power within me live.
—Anon.

God gives us courage to challenge our giants.

The Penny Syndrome

The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion . . . , He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine. —
1 Samuel 17:37

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:32-37

The penny has been called the most despised unit of US currency. Many people will not bother to pick up a one-cent coin if they see it lying on the ground. But some charities are finding that pennies add up to significant sums, and that children are generous givers. As one participant said, "Small contributions can make a huge difference."

The Bible account of David and Goliath describes a seemingly insignificant person whose confidence in God was greater than any of the powerful people around him. When David volunteered to face the giant Goliath, King Saul said, "You are not able to go against this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:33). But David had faith in the Lord who had delivered him in the past (v.37).

David did not suffer from "the penny syndrome"—a sense of inferiority and helplessness in the face of an overwhelming problem. If he had listened to the pessimism of Saul or the threats of Goliath, he would have done nothing. Instead, he acted with courage because he trusted God.

It's easy to feel like a penny in a trillion-dollar deficit. But when we obey the Lord in every circumstance, it all adds up. Collectively, our acts of faith, large or small, make a big difference. And every penny counts. By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

It matters not how large or small
Your faith may seem to be;
What really counts is whom you trust
In life's uncertainty.
—Fitzhugh

Courage will follow when faith takes the lead.

God Looms Larger

You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 17:41–50

Giles Kelmanson, a South African game ranger, described the incredible scene: two honey badgers battling a pride of six lions. Although outnumbered, the honey badgers refused to back down from ferocious predators ten times their size. The lions thought the kill would be simple, but video footage shows the badgers walking away with something like a swagger.

David and Goliath offer an even more improbable story. Young, inexperienced David confronted the fierce Philistine Goliath. Towering above his young combatant, Goliath possessed brute strength and unrivaled weaponry—bronze armor and a lethal, razor-edged javelin (1 Samuel 17:5–6). David, a fledgling shepherd, carried only a slingshot when he arrived at the battlefield with bread and cheeses for his brothers (vv. 17–18).

Goliath challenged Israel to engage in battle, but no one was willing to fight. King Saul and “all the Israelites were . . . terrified” (v. 11). Imagine the shock when David stepped into the fray. What gave him the courage none of Israel's hardened warriors possessed? For most, Goliath dominated their vision. David, however, saw God. “The Lord will deliver [Goliath] into my hands,” he insisted (v. 46). While everyone else believed Goliath controlled the story, he believed God loomed larger. And, with a single stone to the giant's forehead, David's faith proved true.

We're tempted to believe that “Goliath” (our troubles) directs the story. God is larger, however. He dominates the story of our lives. By: Winn Collier ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What concerns threaten to overwhelm you these days? How does God's reality, the fact that He's larger, transform your perspective?

When We're Let Down

The Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hands.
— 1 Samuel 17:47

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:33-50

On August 4, 1991, the MTS Oceanos cruise ship ran into a terrible storm off the coast of South Africa. When the ship began to sink, the captain decided to abandon ship and left with his officers, failing to notify those onboard of any problem. Passenger Moss Hills, a British musician, noticed that something was wrong and sent out a Mayday signal to the South African coast guard. Then, taking matters into their own hands, Moss, his wife Tracy, and other entertainers on board helped organize the evacuation of all passengers by assisting them as they were lifted into helicopters.

Sometimes those we look to for leadership can let us down. When King Saul and his officers faced the belligerent insults of the Philistine giant Goliath, they responded with fear and timidity (1 Sam. 17:11). But a young musician and shepherd boy named David had faith in God that transformed his perspective on this threat. David said to Goliath, “You come to me with a sword But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts” (v.45). David defeated the enemy and turned the tide of battle (v.50). He did not look to earthly leaders for his strength but to the living God.

When others let us down, God may be calling us to provide leadership in His strength and for His honor. By: Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Dear Lord, I don't have the power on my own to lead others through a difficult situation. But You are all-powerful. Give me the courage to help others as I rely on Your strength that cannot fail.

Only as we follow Christ can we lead others in the right direction.

1 Samuel 18

Wise Behavior

Four times in 1 Samuel 18, the writer tells us that David “behaved wisely” (vv.5,14,15,30). In fact, he behaved “more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name became highly esteemed” (v.30).

The phrase “highly esteemed” suggests an unusual respect. David was honored by all the people, but more significantly he was highly respected by those in Saul's court who were impressed by his noble character.

As Christians come to know Jesus through obedience to His Word, they will begin to display qualities of character that set them apart from others, for true wisdom is to live like Christ. It is more than common sense; it is uncommon behavior.

James said, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" (3:17). This gracious way of making our way through the world can come only "from above."

David's experience can be our experience. God's promise to him is also true for believers today. He said, "I will instruct you [cause you to be wise] and teach you in the way you should go" (Psalm 32:8).

Are we learning to behave wisely?—David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Be like Jesus, this my song,
In the home and in the throng;
Be like Jesus, all day long!
I would be like Jesus. —Rowe
© 1912, 1940, The Rodeheaver Co.

Our character is only as strong as our behavior.

1 Samuel 18:1-16

Beware Of Envy!

Envy may be defined as "resentment at the success or happiness of others." Many cultures regard envy lightly. A home remodeling company in Washington, DC, ran an ad that actually appealed to this vice. It used such phrases as "living room lust" and "kitchen envy." It went on to state that you could become the envy of your neighborhood while enhancing the value of your home.

The Bible views envy quite differently, calling it "rotteness to the bones" (Proverbs 14:30). It was out of envy that the religious leaders sought to kill Jesus (Matthew 27:20). And in Galatians 5:19-26, envy is listed among the life-destroying "works of the flesh."

In 1 Samuel 18, we read that envy contributed to the downfall of King Saul. He had begun his rule well, but because he disobeyed God's command he was rejected as king (15:23). Instead of humbly accepting God's decision, he became consumed with envy and hatred toward David (18:8-9). From then on, Saul distanced himself from God and even sought counsel from a medium (28:7). In the end, he took his own life after a shameful defeat by the Philistines (31:4-5). Envy had destroyed him.

Envy can ruin a life. Never take it lightly! —Herb Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When other people find success
But you do not advance,
Do you congratulate their gain
Or wish you had their chance? —Sper

When you turn green with envy you are ripe for trouble.

1 Samuel 20:12-17,41-42

The Power Of Two

In G. K. Chesterton's novel *The Man Who Was Thursday*, an undercover policeman infiltrates a lawless group that is dedicated to throwing the world into chaos. He is gripped with fear until he discovers an ally within the group.

Chesterton writes of the policeman's feelings at finding a friend: "Through all this ordeal his root horror had been isolation, and there are no words to express the abyss between isolation and having one ally. It may be conceded to the mathematicians that four is twice two. But two is not twice one; two is two thousand times one."

When David was being pursued by the jealous and irrational King Saul, he had a friend who risked great danger to stand with him. Jonathan, Saul's own son, pledged his loyalty to David and warned him of his father's intention to kill him (1 Samuel 20:31-42). Later, when Saul pursued David into the wilderness, Jonathan "arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God" (23:16).

What a wonderful gift we give by standing faithfully with a friend in need! There is incredible encouragement and power when two people are allied in life. Whose hand can you strengthen by being a friend today?—David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, help me be the kind of friend

That makes my friend secure;
So he can find new strength and hope
His trials to endure. —D. De Haan

A true friend helps you keep going when you feel like giving up.

1 Samuel 21:10-22:2

Master Of Redemption

As I glanced through the mail, some words on a card from a charitable organization caught my eye: WE NEED YOUR DISCARDS! The meaning was straightforward and simple: Whatever you don't want, we'll take. Those household items you call rubbish, rejects, throwaways, and junk, we'll use to help people in need.

While thinking about such a collection of castoffs, I recalled something I had read in the book of 1 Samuel. A company of desperate men gathered around an uncrowned king who was running for his life. The 400 men who joined David at the cave of Adullam were in distress, in debt, and discontented. Each one faced difficulty and discouragement. "So [David] became captain over them" (1 Samuel 22:2).

In many ways, Christians are a collection of desperate people who have answered the invitation of Jesus: "Come to Me" (Matthew 11:28). By faith, we acknowledge Christ as our Captain, Savior, Leader, and Lord. We come as we are so that we can become what He wants us to be.

If you feel like a moral or spiritual discard, come to Jesus. Loners and losers are welcome at the door. The crucified and risen Christ is the master of redemption for all who turn to Him.—David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Christ asks thee for nothing—
Come just as thou art;
Come sinful, come guilty,
Come give Him thy heart. —Anon.

Jesus came to save the lost, the last, and the least.

1 Samuel 21:11-15

When I'm Afraid

David fled from the home of the priests in Nob with Saul in hot pursuit. He made his way to Gath, the home of his enemies, where he was instantly recognized and brought before King Achish.

David's fame was celebrated everywhere in story and song. He had slain thousands of Philistines (1 Samuel 21:11), a reputation established at the expense of bereaved Philistine women and children. Here was an opportunity to take revenge.

David lost his nerve. In terror, he "pretended madness ... , scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard" (v.13). Achish dismissed him with contempt: "Shall this fellow come into my house?" (v.15). Broken and utterly humiliated, David fled to Adullam in Judah. Close by was a hill honeycombed with caves. Into one of those holes he crept-alone.

As he experienced the solitude of that cave, at the nadir of his life and surrounded by enemies, David began to reflect on God's tender, faithful love. "When I am afraid, I will trust in You," he wrote (Psalm 56:3). "You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle" (v.8).

Perhaps you're "in a cave" today. You too can say, "In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid" (v.11)—David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I have no reason to fear,
For Jesus my Savior is near;
I'll trust the Lord and His power
To save and to keep me each hour. -Hess

Loneliness is being unaware of the One who is with us everywhere.

1 Samuel 22

Cave Man

David was stuck in a cave (Psalm 142). Some Bible commentators think this was when he was running from King Saul, who wanted to kill him (1 Samuel 22:1). Trouble and troublemakers hounded him. Hemmed in by his circumstances and smothered by danger, he turned to God for help.

David was frightened, so he poured out his complaint to God (1 Samuel 22:2).

He felt alone and uncared for, so he cried out to God (1 Samuel 22:1,4-5).

His situation was desperate, so he pleaded for rescue (1 Samuel 22:6).

David was trapped, so he begged for freedom (1 Samuel 22:7).

What cave surrounds you today? A cave of despair brought on by grief or illness? A cave of difficulties caused by your own poor decisions? Are you stuck in a cave of questions or doubts that rob you of joy and confidence?

Here's what David did when he was trapped in his cave: He asked God for mercy, he sought refuge in Him, and he promised to use his eventual freedom as a way to praise God. In the end, he looked forward to the comfort of fellow believers.

Complaint followed by faith. Desperation followed by praise. Loneliness followed by fellowship. We can learn a lot from a cave man. —Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When we experience suffering,
God's comfort will abound;
For tribulations teach us where
True comfort can be found. —Sper

In every desert of calamity, God has an oasis of comfort.

1 Samuel 24:1-15

Not My Hand

There are times when it's best to wait for God to act instead of trying to make things happen ourselves. It's a lesson we see clearly when David refused to take King Saul's life, even though the king was trying to kill him (1 Samuel 24). When Saul was alone and vulnerable in a cave, David's men told him this was a God-given opportunity to take the kingship that rightfully belonged to him (1 Samuel 24:4). But David refused, saying, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him" (1 Samuel 24:6).

After Saul left the cave, David called out to him, "Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you" (1 Samuel 24:12). David knew that God had chosen him to become king. But he also knew that killing Saul was not the right way to make it happen. He would wait for God to remove Saul from the throne.

Is there an obstacle between you and something that is rightfully yours? You believe it's God's will, but the method of obtaining it and the timing don't seem right. Think long and pray hard before taking a bad path toward a good goal.

Waiting for God to act is the best opportunity for the right things to happen His way. —David C. McCasland [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O God, make me one of those rarest of souls
Who willingly wait for Thy time;
My impatient will must be lost in Thine own,
And Thy will forever be mine. —Bowser

God's timing is always right—wait patiently for Him.

1 Samuel 24:1-22

David's Restraint

The relationship between David and King Saul is one of the strangest and most volatile recorded in the Bible. David came to Saul's rescue on several occasions (as a harp player and as a warrior), he was best friends with the king's son, and he married the king's daughter. Now, don't you think such a person would be in pretty good standing with the monarch?

Not David. Saul was out to get the former shepherd boy. Twice Saul tried to spear David while he was playing the harp for him. And

later, Saul sent his troops after the young man to try to kill him.

Yet look at what happened when the two finally crossed paths and David had the chance to kill Saul. Instead of attacking him, David sneaked up and cut off a piece of his robe. Afterward, he felt guilty even for doing that (1 Samuel 24:5). When they later met face to face, David told the king, "My hand shall not be against you" (1 Samuel 24:13). Saul saw that David had rewarded his evil with good, and he wept (1 Samuel 24:16-17).

Sometimes we must deal with people who are eager to bring us down—or so we think; maybe an employer or a co-worker. Like David, let's do what God would have us do—use restraint, and keep on doing good. —Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I want the love that always sweetly bears
Whate'er my Father's hand may choose to send;
I want the love that patiently endures
The wrongs that come from enemy or friend. —Anon.

Revenge restrained is a victory gained.

1 Samuel 25:14-35

Peacemakers

Abigail was a remarkable woman! She was a true peacemaker whose courage spared the future king of Israel from committing a terrible sin. Here's her story:

David had been forced to live in the countryside to escape King Saul's jealous wrath. A group of about 600 men and their families had gathered around him. For several months they camped near Carmel where the flocks of Nabal (Abigail's husband) were grazing. David's men had helped Nabal's shepherds protect the sheep from robbers. Now the shearing time had come, and David sent messengers to request some compensation from Nabal, who was a wealthy man. But he refused and treated David's men with disdain.

In anger David rashly decided to kill Nabal and all the men in his household. When Abigail heard what had happened, she quickly gathered a large supply of food, intercepted David and his fighting men, and humbly apologized for her husband's surly behavior. David immediately realized that she had prevented him from carrying out a vengeful decision, and he praised God (1 Samuel 25:32).

Are we as quick to resolve a conflict? Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).—Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

How blest are those who persevere
To bring a conflict to an end;
And if the peace of Christ takes hold,
An enemy becomes a friend. —D. De Haan

You can be a peacemaker if you have God's peace in your heart.

1 Samuel 26:1-9

Flimsy Reasons

Years ago, an employee in the butcher shop where I worked was caught stealing several hams. He defended himself by saying that he had earned them because he was underpaid. That was a flimsy reason for his sinful behavior.

In 1 Samuel we read how David was being hunted by King Saul. One night, David and his companions went to Saul's camp and discovered that the king and his men were asleep. Abishai asked permission to kill Saul, saying that this opportunity had come from God. David could have easily agreed. He undoubtedly remembered the last time he spared Saul's life when he could have killed him. At that time Saul had wept when he learned of David's mercy. He had declared David's fitness to be Israel's next king, and had quit the chase (1 Samuel 24).

But Saul had resumed his grim pursuit. David could have reasoned, "I spared him once. God is giving me this second opportunity." David rejected such thinking because he believed it would be wrong to kill the man God had anointed to be Israel's king. So he refused to do it.

When you are treated unjustly, it's easy to excuse your own hatred, impurity, dishonesty, and cruelty. But don't give in to the temptation. Like David, do what's right. —Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Injustices are hard to bear,
They make us want to fight;
But God knows what we're going through--
In time He'll make things right. --Sper

If you rationalize one sin, it becomes two.

1 Samuel 26:1-26

Unexpected Kindness

A missionary was teaching a class of young girls about kindness. She told them about Jesus, who said that a person who gives a cup of water in His name "will by no means lose his reward" (Mark 9:41).

The next day the missionary watched as a group of weary men walked into the village square, removed their heavy backpacks, and sat down to rest. A few minutes later, several little girls shyly approached the surprised men and gave them all a drink. Then they ran to the missionary. "Teacher!" they shouted. "We gave those men a drink in Jesus' name."

Although Mark 9:41 applies primarily to showing kindness to believers in Christ, we know that we are to "do good to all" (Galatians 6:10) and even give our enemy a drink (Romans 12:20).

In today's Bible reading, David had the chance for revenge against King Saul (1 Samuel 26:9). But because David revered God, he showed kindness to the king.

Showing unexpected kindness to strangers or enemies will not always change their hearts. But sooner or later someone will wonder why we were kind, and we will have an opportunity to tell about our Lord, who was kind even to His enemies (Romans 5:10).—Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Do a deed of simple kindness,
Though its end you may not see;
It may reach, like widening ripples,
Down a long eternity. —Norris

One act of kindness may teach more about the love of God than many sermons.

1 Samuel 30:11-18

Unsung Heroes

The Bible contains many incidents of helpfulness by people whose names are not given. In 1 Samuel 30 we read that David's soldiers found a young man who had been left behind by a retreating enemy army. The Egyptian slave is not named, but he provided key information that helped David to rescue his family.

I also think of the young boy whose lunch of bread and fish was multiplied by Jesus to feed thousands (John 6:9), the owners of the colt on which Jesus rode into Jerusalem (Luke 19:33), and the owner of the house in which Jesus and His disciples ate the last Passover (22:11). Then there was the boy who saved Paul's life (Acts 23:16-22).

In our world today, there are many people who receive no recognition, who never get their names published nor hear the applause of others. Many faithfully pray, sacrificially give, patiently suffer for Christ. Countless mothers quietly care for their families, and men and women courageously witness to co-workers and neighbors. They may be unnamed and unpraised here and now—but in heaven the last shall be first (Matthew 19:30).

Be patient, dear unnoticed child of God. Your reward is coming! —M. R. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Press on in your service for Jesus,
Spurred on by your love for the Lord;
He promised that if you are faithful,
One day you'll receive your reward. —Fasick

It is better to be faithful than famous

1 Samuel 30:1-25

Who Packed Your Chute?

Charles Plumb was sitting in a restaurant when a man came up to him and said, "You're Plumb. You flew jet fighters in Vietnam. You were on the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!" "How in the world did you know all that?" asked Plumb. The man, who had been on the same ship, replied, "I packed your parachute." Then he added, "I guess it worked." "Indeed it did," said Plumb.

That night Plumb thought of this man who had stood at a table in the belly of the ship carefully folding parachutes for men whose lives might depend on them. Plumb was saddened and humbled as he thought, How many times might I have passed this man but didn't even say good morning because I was a jet pilot and he was a low-ranking sailor?

This story brings to mind David's words in today's Bible reading. Two hundred of his men became too weary to march farther to fight the Amalekites. So they stayed behind to guard the supplies. When David returned from battle, he made no distinction between them and his fighting men. He said, "They shall share alike" (1 Samuel 30:24).

In God's service there are no high and low people, no high and low tasks. We all depend on one another. Let's never forget those who packed our parachute.—Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, help us to appreciate
The work that others do,
The service given from their hearts,
Their sacrifice for You. —Sper

No service for Christ is insignificant.

Devotionals F B Meyer Our Daily Homily

1 Samuel 1:15

I have poured out my soul before the Lord.

Hannah's soul was full of complaint and grief, which flowed over into her face and made it sorrowful. But when she had poured out her soul before the Lord, emptying out all its bitterness, the peace of God took the place of her soul-anguish, she went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. What a glad exchange! How great the contrast! How much the better for herself, and for her home!

Is your face darkened by the bitterness of your soul? Perhaps the enemy has been vexing you sorely; or there is an unrealized hope, an unfulfilled purpose in your life; or, perchance, the Lord seems to have forgotten you. Poor sufferer, there is nothing for it but to pour out your soul before the Lord. Empty out its contents in confession and prayer. God knows it all; yet tell Him, as if He knew nothing. "Ye people, pour out your hearts before Him. God is a refuge for us." "In everything, by prayer and supplication make your requests known unto God."

As we pour out our bitterness, God pours in His peace. Weeping goes out of one door whilst joy enters at another. We transmit the cup, of tears to the Man of Sorrows, and He hands it back to us filled with the blessings of the new covenant. Some day you will come to the spot where you wept and prayed, bringing your offering of praise and thanksgiving.

1 Samuel 2:19

His mother made him a little coat.

What happy work it was! Those nimble fingers flew along the seams, because love inspired them. All her woman's art and wit were put into the garment, her one idea and ambition being to make something which should be not only useful, but becoming. Not mothers only, but fathers, are always making little coats for their children, which they wear long years after a material fabric would

have become worn out. How many men and women are wearing to-day the coats which their parents cut out and made for them long years ago!

Habits are the vesture of the soul. The Apostle bade his converts put off the old man, "which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts," and to put on the new man "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"; to put off anger, wrath, and malice, whilst they put on mercy, humility, and meekness. What words could better establish the fact that habits are (as the name indicates) the clothing of the inner life? Where and how are habits formed? Not in the mid-passage of life, but at its dawn; not in great crises, but in daily circumstances; not in life's arena but in the home, amid the surroundings of earliest childhood. Oh that the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness may ever be exhibited before those with whom we daily come in contact!

By their behavior to each other and to their children; by the ordering of the home-life; by their actions, more than by their words; by the way in which they speak, and spend their leisure hours, and pray—men and women are making the little coats which, for better or worse, their children wear ever after, and perhaps pass down to after generations.

1 Samuel 3:10

And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel!

See the urgency of God! Four times He came, and stood, and called. Mark how He stands at the door to knock. At first He was content to call the lad once by name; but after three unsuccessful attempts to attract him to Himself, He uttered the name twice, with strong urgency in the appeal, Samuel! Samuel! This has been called God's double knock. There are seven or eight of these double knocks in Scripture: Simon, Simon; Saul, Saul; Abraham, Abraham.

How may we be sure of a Divine call?

We may know God's call when it grows in intensity.—If an impression comes into your soul, and you are not quite sure of its origin, pray over it; above all, act on it so far as possible, follow in the direction in which it leads—and as you lift up your soul before God, it will wax or wane. If it wanes at all, abandon it. If it waxes, follow it, though all hell attempt to stay you.

We may test God's call by the assistance of godly friends.—The aged Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child, and gave him good advice as to the manner in which he should respond to it. Our special gifts and the drift of our circumstances will also assuredly concur in one of God's calls.

We may test God's call by its effect on us.— Does it lead to self-denial? Does it induce us to leave the comfortable bed and step into the cold? Does it drive us forth to minister to others? Does it make us more unselfish, loving, tender, modest, humble? Whatever is to the humbling of our pride, and the glory of God, may be truly deemed God's call. Be quick to respond, and fearlessly deliver the message the Lord has given you.

1 Samuel 4:3

Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord.

Israel had been defeated with great loss. Their only hope of being able to hold their own against the Philistines and the people of the land was in the protection and help vouchsafed to them by God. They knew this, and thought that they would be secured, if only the Ark of the covenant were on the field. They forgot that it was only the material symbol of a spiritual relationship; that it was useless unless that relationship was in living force; and that the bending forms of the cherubim, emblematic of the Divine protection, would not avail if their fellowship with the God of the cherubim had been ruptured by black-sliding.

There is a sense in which we are always sending for the Ark. The reliance on outward rites, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, on the part of those who are alienated from the life of God; the maintenance of the forms of prayer and Scripture-reading which no longer express the passionate love of the soul; the habit of church-going, which so many practice, not because they love God, but because they think that it will in some way secure His alliance in life's battle— all these are forms in which we still fetch the Ark of the covenant, whilst our hearts are wrong with the God of the covenant.

It should never be forgotten that nothing can afford us protection and succor but vital union with Christ. We must hide in His secret place if we would abide under His shadow. We must dwell in the most holy place if we would be shadowed by the wings of the Shekinah. There must be nothing between us and God, if we are to walk together, and enjoy fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

1 Samuel 5:3

Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the Lord.

The idols of the heathen represent demons who are their accepted gods, just as the Ark was the symbol of the presence of Jehovah. In the one case there was a material representation of the demon; but in the case of the Ark there was only a throne, the Mercy Seat; and no attempt was made to represent the appearance of the God of Israel. When placed in the Holy of Holies, the Shekinah shone between the cherubim; this alone spoke of the Divine Spirit who filled the apparently vacant throne. When the effigy of the fish-god was confronted by the Sacred Ark, it was as though the demon spirit and the Divine Spirit had come into contact, with the inevitable result that the inferiority of the one ensured the crash of its effigy to the ground.

What a lesson this must have been to the Philistines—similar to that given Pharaoh in the plagues of Egypt, and with the same object of leading them to see the superior greatness of Jehovah! How great the encouragement to Israel—to know that God could defend His superiority! And how striking the prognostication for the future, when all the Dagon of the world shall be broken before the symbol of Divine power and love!

Bring the Ark of God into your life. Set it down in your heart, and forthwith the Dagon which have held sway for so long will one after another succumb. "The idols He will utterly abolish." Let Christ in—that is the one need of the soul; and let Him take full possession of you. Then He will do His own work. Darkness cannot abide light; nor the defilement of the Augean stable the turning in of the water of the river.

1 Samuel 6:12

And the kine went along the highway, lowing as they went.

That two milch kine which had never borne the yoke should move quietly along the high road, turning neither to the right nor to the left, and lowing for the calves they had left behind, clearly indicated that they were possessed and guided by some mysterious power, which we know to have been God's. And if He were able thus to overpower the instincts of their nature, and to compel them to do His will, may we not infer that all circumstances, and all men, however unwittingly, and against their natural instinct, are subserving the purposes of His will, and bearing on the Ark? The fish yields the tribute money; the colt of the ass waits where two ways meet to bear the Redeemer; the man with the waterpot leads to the upper room; the Roman soldiers enable Paul to fulfill the mission of his life, in preaching the Gospel without hindrance in the very heart of Rome.

As we go forth into the world, let us believe that the movement of all things is toward the accomplishment of God's purpose. Herein is a fulfillment of the Psalmist's prediction about man, which can only be perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the second Adam—that all things are under His feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field. Everything serves Christ and those who serve Christ. In a true sense all things are ours; they minister to us, even as Christ to God.

And against our natural inclinations let us always regard the claims of God as paramount; and dare to go His way, though our heart pines for those we leave behind. "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than Me, is not worthy of Me."

1 Samuel 6:20

From Our Daily Walk

March 5 - STANDING BEFORE GOD

"Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?"-- 1 Samuel 6:20.

THE PHRASE "to stand before God" designates a high-toned religious life; it includes the knowledge of God, the faculty of executing His commands, and the power of interceding for others. The phrase was a favourite one with Elijah, as expressing the spirit of his great career, and we surely desire that the spirit and attitude of our life may be designated thus. But if this is to be something more than a vague wish, or idle dream, there must be a close adhesion to great principles.

Amongst many it is the general tendency to follow the practice of the majority. We drift with the current, and allow our lives to be settled by our companions or our whims, our fancies or our tastes. If we have a momentary qualm, in contrasting our lives with the standards of primitive simplicity, of which Scripture, or the biographies of the saints are full, we excuse ourselves by saying that so long as the main purpose of life is right the details are unimportant. But what we are in the smallest details of our life, that we are really and essentially.

What a revolution would come to us all, if it became the one fixed aim and ambition of our lives to stand before God, and to do always those things that are pleasing in His sight. It would not make us less tender in our friendships, or less active in our service. It would not take the sparkle from the eye; the nerve from the grasp; or the warm glow from the heart. But it would check many a vain word, arrest many a silly jest, stop much selfish and vainglorious expenditure, and bring us back to whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely and of good report.

We must hold lightly to the things around us. It is difficult to say what worldliness consists in, for what is worldly to some people is an ordinary part of life's circumstance to others. But all of us are sensible of ties that hold us to the earth. We may discover what they are by considering what we cling to most; what we find hard to let go, even into the hands of Christ. Whatever it is, flit hinders us from living on the highest level; if it is a weight that impedes our speed heavenward, it should be laid deliberately on God's altar, that we may be able, without let or hindrance, to be wholly for God.

PRAYER - May the Holy Spirit enable us to realise in daily life our true position in Thy purpose. May we in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell. May our affections be set on things above, not on things of the earth. AMEN.

1 Samuel 7:8

Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God.

Samuel was famous for his prayers. They are repeatedly referred to in the brief record of his life. In the Psalms he is spoken of as the one "who called upon God's name." Indeed, he fought and won Israel's battles by his strong intercessions. Mary of Scots said that she dreaded the prayers of John Knox more than the battalions of the King of France. So his people were accustomed to think that if the prophet's hands were held out in importunate prayer, their foes must be restrained.

In the Life of Mr. Reginald Radcliffe, one who contributes a reminiscence interjects a remark which deserves to be carefully pondered:—"The great secret of the blessing which came from God to the awakening of whole districts, the quickening of Christians, and the salvation of multitudes, was prayer, continued, fervent, believing, expectant. There was never anything striking in the addresses; but through communion with the living Christ, the word came forth with living and life-giving power. Often would the forenoon be spent in continuous prayer." This may well convict some of us of the cause of our failure. We have expected the Lord to thunder and discomfort our Philistines, and with a great deliverance; but we have ceased to cry unto the Lord.

Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, cease not to cry unto Him. If the judge avenged the unfortunate widow, shall not God avenge His own elect, who cry day and night? It is recorded of our Lord that He prayed early and late, and all night. He prayed when He was about to be transfigured; for His disciples; in the Garden of Gethsemane; and for His murderers. How much more do we need to "pray without ceasing"!

1 Samuel 8:6

But the thing displeased Samuel... , And Samuel prayed unto the Lord.

A little further down in the chapter we learn that Samuel rehearsed the words of the people unto the Lord. His prayer, to a large extent, was a rehearsal of all the strong and unkind things that the people had said to him; and in this way he passed them off his mind, and found relief. There is a suggestion of close communion with God in the expression, "He rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord." It had been the habit of his life to be on intimate terms with his God.

Things do not always turn out as we had hoped, and we get displeased for our own sakes and God's. We had planned in one direction, but events have issued in another; and the results have threatened to become disastrous. There is but one resource. If we allow vexations to eat into our heart, they will corrode and injure it. We must rehearse them to God — spreading the letter before Him as Hezekiah did; making request like Paul; crying like Samuel.

Surely it is the mistake of our life, that we carry our burdens instead of handing them over; that we worry instead of trusting; that we pray so little. The grass grows thick on the pathway to our oratory; the cobwebs hang across the doorway. The time we spend in prayer is perhaps better spent than in any other way. It was whilst Samuel prayed thus, that he saw the Divine program for Israel:

"And he who at the sixth hour sought The lone house-top to pray, There gained a sight beyond his thought— The dawn of Gentile day. Then reckon not, when perils lour, The time of prayer misspent; Nor meanest chance, nor place, nor hour, Without its heavenward bent."

1 Samuel 9:6

Behold, there is in this city a man of God.

There is a street in London, near St. Paul's, which I never traverse without very peculiar feelings. It is Godliman Street. Evidently the name is a corruption of godly man. Did some saint of God once live here, whose life was so holy as to give a sweet savor to the very street in which he dwelt? Were the neighbors who knew him best, the most sure of his godliness? Would that our piety might leave its mark on our neighborhoods, and the memory linger long after we have passed away!

A generation or two ago in the Highlands, there were earnest and holy men who were known by the significant title of the men. No great religious gathering was deemed complete without them. Their prayers and exhortations were accompanied by an especial

unction.

In such manner Samuel's godliness was recognized far and wide. The fragrance of his character could not be concealed. And this gave men confidence in him. They said, "He is an honorable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass." How much credit redounds to godliness, when it is combined with trustworthiness and high credit amongst our fellows!

Let us seek to be God's men and women. Let us live not only soberly and righteously, but godly, in this present world. Let us remember that God hath set apart the godly for Himself. The godly are the godlike. They become so by cultivating the fellowship and friendship of God. Their faces become enlightened with His beauty; their words are weighty with His truth. After being for a little in their company, you detect the gravity, serenity, gentleness, beauty of holiness, which are the court manners of heaven.

1 Samuel 10:7

Thou shalt do as occasion serve thee.

This is an example of how God demands of us the use of our sanctified common-sense. Samuel sketches to Saul the course of events during the next few days; showing how clearly our lives lie naked and open to the eyes of God, and how easily He can reveal them when necessary. But whilst the various incidents are told, the prophet does not feel it incumbent to tell this goodly young man how he should behave in any given instance. "When these signs are come upon thee, thou shalt do as occasion serve thee."

We are reminded of a parallel in the life of Peter. The angel of God unbarred the prison-doors, and led him forth, because nothing short of Divine power would avail. He led the dazed Apostle through one street, because he was too bewildered to realize what had happened. But, as soon as the night-air had brought him to his senses, the angel left him "to consider the matter"— to use his own judgment. The result of which was, that he went to the house of Mary.

One of the divinest of our faculties is the judgment, before which the reasons for and against a certain course of action must be adduced, but with which the ultimate decision lies. It is a tendency with some to depreciate the use of this wonderful power, by looking for signs and visions to point their path. This is a profound mistake. God will give these when there are complications in which the exercise of judgment might be at fault; but not where it is sufficient. Where no sign is given, carefully divest yourself of selfish considerations, weigh the pros and cons, ask for guidance, dare to act; and having acted in faith, never look back or doubt.

1 Samuel 11:14

Come, let us go to Gilgal, and renew the Kingdom there.

It is good to have days and occasions for renewing the kingdom. Already Saul had been anointed king. It was a recognized matter that he should inaugurate the days of the kings, as distinguished from those of the judges. But his great victory at Jabesh-Gilead seems to have wrought the enthusiasm of the people to the highest pitch, and to have presented a great opportunity for renewing the kingdom. They went to Gilgal to do this, because there, on the first entrance into Canaan, Israel had rolled away the reproach of uncircumcision, which symbolized their lack of separation.

Jesus is our King. The Father hath anointed Him, and set Him on His holy hill; and we have gladly assented to the appointment, and made Him King. But sometimes our sense of loyalty and devotion wanes. Insensibly we drift from our strenuous endeavor to act always as His devoted subjects. Therefore we need, from time to time, to renew the kingdom, and reverently make Him King before the Lord. Go over the old solemn form of dedication; turn to the yellow leaves of the diary; bring under His scepter any new provinces of influence that have been acquired; tell Him how glad and thankful you are to live only for Him. Let this be done at Gilgal, the place of circumcision and separation, with the Jordan of death flowing behind, and the Land of Promise beckoning in front. There is a sense in which we can consecrate ourselves only once; but we can renew our vows often.

Blessings abound where'er He reigns; The prisoner leaps to burst his chains; The weary find eternal rest, And all the sons of want are blest.

1 Samuel 12:22a

The Lord will not forsake His people for His great Name's sake.

The certainty of our salvation rests on the character of God. Moses, years before, had pleaded that God could not afford to destroy or forsake Israel, lest the Egyptians and others should have some ground for saying that He was not able to carry out His purpose, or that He was fickle and changeable. "What wilt Thou do for thy great Name?" Samuel uses the same argument. We also may avail ourselves of it for our great comfort.

God knew what we should be—how weak and frail and changeable—before He arrested us and brought us to Himself. Speaking after the manner of men, we might say He counted the cost. He computed whether His resources were sufficient to secure us from our foes,

keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. He foreknew how much forbearance, pity, consolation, and tenderness, we should require. And yet it pleased Him to make us His people. He cannot, therefore, now run back from His purpose; otherwise it would seem that difficulties had arisen which either He had not anticipated, or was not so well able to combat as He had thought. What an absurd suggestion! In the former case there would be a slur on His omniscience; on the other, upon His omnipotence.

“What if God should cast you into hell?” was asked of an old Scotchwoman. “Well,” she answered, “If He do, all I can say is, He will lose mair than I will.”

The gracious promise given to Joshua may be appropriated by every trembling saint of God “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” And to the poor and needy He says, “I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”

1 Samuel 13:12

I forced myself, therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

This was wholly outside Saul's province. Samuel had engaged to arrive within the seven days: they had nearly expired, and still there were no signs of the prophet; and Saul, yielding to the promptings of his impetuous nature, took the matter into his own hand, and rashly assumed an office to which he had no right. He protested that he had been very unwilling to add the function of priest to that of king. But this was notoriously contrary to the truth. For some time he had chafed against Samuel's prerogative, and now sought to supersede the Divine order.

It seemed but a small act, and, to superficial judgment, not enough to warrant the loss of his kingdom; but it was symptomatic of a great moral deficiency. He had not learned to obey the commandment of the Lord: how could he rule? He could not control the hasty suggestions of his own nature, in favor of the deliberate movement of the Divine order: how could he be God's chosen agent? He acted on the showings of expediency, rather than of faith: how could he be a man after God's own heart? The restlessness and haste which characterize the present age must not be allowed to affect our service for God; for thereby the progress of the Gospel will be hindered rather than helped.

We must learn to wait for God. He may not come till the allotted time has almost passed; but He will come. He waits for the exact moment in which He can best succor you. Not till patience has been exercised, but before it has given out. In the meanwhile, be sure that your safety is secured; He will see to it that the Philistines shall not come down to overwhelm you.

1 Samuel 14:27

His eyes were enlightened.

The Philistines were in full flight. The Israelites followed hard at their heels through the wood. It was there that the honey dropped in rich abundance on the ground, and there Jonathan tasted a little, dipping the end of his rod into it. It made all the difference to him, warding off the excessive exhaustion which paralyzed the rest of the army.

The Word of God is sweeter than the honeycomb.— Luscious to the sanctified taste; enlightening to the dimming eyes; strength-giving to the weary. It drops in abundance to the ground, as though inviting the hand of the Christian warrior or wayfarer to take it freely. If there is no taste for the written Word, it may be assumed that the living Word has not been enthroned in the heart; for where He reigns supreme, there is a longing for the food which alone can fit us for the Christian life.

Where we cannot take much, let us take some.— There was not time for Jonathan to sit down and take his fill. He could only catch up some as he hastily passed through the forest-glade; but that little made all the difference to him. So, in the early morning, or at midday, if we cannot fill our hearts with Scripture, we may catch up a morsel, which will minister untold refreshment, and clear our spiritual vision.

We specially need to do this when flushed with success.— Too often, when we have had success in the battles of the Lord—a good time in preaching or teaching— we are apt to congratulate ourselves, and suppose that we can live on the emotions excited. But, probably, there is no time when we need more absolutely to turn to the Word of God. In victory, as in defeat, we must be fed and nourished.

1 Samuel 15:22

To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

This is a great principle, which is repeatedly enforced throughout the Bible. Men have always been apt to divorce religion and morality, and to suppose that a certain tribute of sacrifice to God will be sufficient compensation for notorious evil-doing. But in every age God's servants have protested against the notion, and have insisted, as Samuel did with Saul, that it were better to obey,

although there should be no spoil from which to select victims for sacrifice. This was Christ's perpetual protest against the Pharisees.

Let the Ritualist beware.— There is a grave fear lest extreme attention to the outward rite may be accompanied by carelessness to the inward temper. When the outward observance is the expression of the attitude of the soul, it is to be respected even by those of us who feel that excessive symbolism is hostile to the devout life; but where the rite takes the place of the soul's devotion, or condones a lax morality, it cannot be too sternly deprecated. Though all the Levitical rites should be observed without flaw, they could not compensate for the persistent neglect of the least item of the decalogue. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Let us all beware.— We are apt to make sacrifices of time and money and energy for God, and to comfort ourselves with the reflection that such as we are may be excused if in small lapses of temper, or disposition, we come short of the Divine standard. No; it cannot pass muster. One sin mastered, one temptation resisted, one duty performed, is dearer to God than the most costly sacrifices that were ever piled upon the altar.

1 Samuel 16:13

The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.

What may not a day bring forth! Here was a shepherd lad, summoned hastily from his sheep, and anointed king. But an even greater blessing came into his life that day, for he was mightily endued with the Holy Spirit. Without doubt, during his early years the Spirit of God had dwelt within him, molding his character, inditing his songs; but, henceforth, the Spirit was to abide on him, as a Divine unction.

Why should not this day witness a similar transformation for you; not in the change of earthly position, but in your reception of the "power from on high" through a renewed endowment? Why should not the Spirit of the Lord come mightily upon you from this holy hour, even as your eyes glance down this page? Though it is quite possible that you have been empowered once, there is no finality in God's bestowals; the apostles were filled and filled again (Acts 2 and 4).

The age of Pentecost in which we live is distinctly one of Divine anointing. It awaits all who will separate themselves to God, and receive it for His glory. The characteristic preposition of this age is on. If you have not received power, seek it; he that seeketh findeth; nay, receive it— to ask is to get. If the Master, though begotten of the Holy Spirit, forbore to preach the Gospel, and bind up broken hearts, till He had been anointed as the Christ by the Spirit, who descended on Him at His baptism; how foolish it is for us, who were born in sin, to attempt similar work, apart from similar endowment! The promise to each child of God is: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8).

1 Samuel 17:26, 36

The armies of the living God.

This made all the difference between David and the rest of the camp. To Saul and his soldiers God was an absentee— a name, but little else. They believed that He had done great things for His people in the past, and that at some future time, in the days of the Messiah, He might be expected to do great things again; but no one thought of Him as present. Keenly sensitive to the defiance of the Philistine, and grieved by the apathy of his people, David, on the other hand, felt that God was alive. He had lived alone with Him in the solitude of the hills, till God had become one of the greatest and most real facts of his young existence; and as the lad went to and fro among the armed warriors, he was sublimely conscious of the presence of the living God amid the clang of the camp.

This is what we need. To live so much with God, that when we come amongst men, whether in the bazaars of India or the market-place of an English town, we may be more aware of His overshadowing presence than of the presence or absence of any one. Lo, God is here! This place is hallowed ground! But none can realize this by the act of the will. We can only find God everywhere when we carry Him everywhere. The miner sees by the candle he carries on his forehead.

Each of us is opposed by difficulties, privations, and trials of different sorts. But the one answer to them all is faith's vision of the Living God. We can face the mightiest foe in His name. If our faith can but make Him a passage, along which He shall come, there is no Goliath He will not quell; no question He will not answer; no need He will not meet.

1 Samuel 18:5, 14–15, 30(18a)

David behaved himself wisely.

There must be some strong reason for the fourfold repetition of this phrase in so short a space. It is as though the Holy Ghost would lay very distinct stress on the Divine prudence and circumspection, which must characterize the man whose life is hid in God. Let us walk with God, abiding in Him, subjecting our thoughts and plans to His communing about all things with Him, talking over our lives

with Him, before we go out to live them in the presence of our fellows. Then we too shall have this gracious wisdom, which is more moral than intellectual—the product of the grace of God rather than of human culture.

Our life shall commend itself to men (1 Samuel 18:5).— David's was good in the sight of all the people, and more wonderful still, in the sight of Saul's servants, who might have been jealous. A life lived in God disarms jealousy and envy. He who, as a boy, did His Father's business increased in wisdom, and in favor with God and men.

Our life shall rebuke and awe our foes (1 Samuel 18:15).— Saul stood in awe of him. When traps and snares are laid for us we shall be enabled to thread our way through them all, as Jesus did when they tried to entangle Him in His talk. We shall have a wisdom which all our foes together shall not be able to gainsay or resist.

Our name will be precious (1 Samuel 18:30).— People loved to dwell on the name of David; it was much set by; they noticed and were impressed with the beauty and nobility of his character. We must always view our lives, amusements, and undertakings, in the light of the result which will accrue to Him whose name it is our privilege to bear.

1 Samuel 19:6

And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan.

It was a noble act of Jonathan. He might have withdrawn from his friendship with David when it threatened his relations with his father; but, instead, he stepped into the breach, and pleaded for his friend, endeavoring to eradicate the false and ungenerous conceptions of which Saul had become possessed. It is an example we do well to study and copy. For his love's sake, as well as for his father's, he was extremely eager to effect a reconciliation between him to whom he owed allegiance of son and subject, and this fair shepherd-minstrel-warrior, who had so recently cast a sunny gleam upon his life.

Men often misconceive of one another. Jealousy and envy distort behavior and actions which are in themselves as beautiful as possible. Misrepresentation will blind us to the true excellences of one another's characters. Wrong constructions are often put on the most innocent incidents. We cannot help these things, they are part of the sad heritage of the Fall; but we may often take up the cause of a misunderstood man, and at the risk of losing our own reputation, and diverting to ourselves some of the odium which attaches to him, we may stand as his sponsors.

Even if we dislike another, as Saul did David, let us give scope to the good Spirit to plead his cause at the bar of our hearts, as Jonathan did for his friend. Let us consider all the kind and loving things that may be said of him; let us put ourselves in his position; let us be willing to believe and hope all things. Let us plead for others, since this is a work in which Christ's followers most closely approximate to Him who ever liveth to intercede.

1 Samuel 20:18

Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.

Jonathan and David had entered into a covenant, each loving the other as his own soul. Anxious to shield his friend from the wrath of his father, Jonathan discloses to David the plan by which he shall know how matters fared in the royal palace. David's vacant seat suggests a lesson for us.

There are a good many empty seats in our houses. Those that occupied them can never do so again; they have gone never to return again, and we miss them sorely.

Let us see to it that we do not leave our seats in the home circle needlessly vacant. Let not the mother be away at the dance, or even at the religious meeting, when she should be at home, joining in her children's evening prayers. Let the father be very sure that God has called him elsewhere, before he habitually vacates his place in the evening family circle. Let each of us avoid giving needless pain to those we love by leaving empty seats. But if God calls us away to His service, then for those who miss us, another Form shall glide in, and sit in the vacant chair; and they will become conscious that the Master is filling the gap, and beguiling the weary moments.

Above all, let not your seat be empty in the house of God, at the ordinary service, or at the Lord's Table. We are too prone to allow a trifle to deter us from joining in the sacred feasts. At such times we are missed, our empty seat witnesses against us; there is a lack in the song and prayer, which cries out against us; there is a distinct loss to the power of the service, which is in proportion to the number of earnest souls present. Oh that there may be no empty seats at the marriage supper, vacated through our unfaithfulness!

1 Samuel 21:9

There is none like that; give it me.

What David said of the sword of Goliath we may say of Holy Scripture—the sword of the Spirit— “There is none like that.”

There is no book like the Bible for those convinced of sin.— The Word of God assures the sinner of God’s love in Christ, whilst it refuses to condone a single sin, or excuse one shortcoming. The Bible is as stern as conscience herself against sin, but as pitiful as the heart of God to the sinner. It, moreover, discloses the method by which the just God becomes the justifier of those who believe.

There is no book like the Bible for the sorrowful.— It tells of the Comforter; it reminds us that in all our sorrow God also is sad; it points to the perfect plan according to which God is working out our blessedness; it insists that all things are working together for good; it opens the vision of the blessed future, where all the griefs and tears of men shall be put away forever.

There is no book like the Bible for the dying.— “Read to me,” said Sir Walter Scott, on his dying bed, to his friend. “What shall I read?” “There is only one book for a dying man,” was the answer; “read to me from the Bible.” The Book which tells of the Lord, who died and rose again; of the mansions which He has gone to prepare; of the reunion of the saints; of the fountains of water of life— is the only pillow on which the dying head can rest softly.

In these days of debate and doubt there is no such evidence for the Divine authority of the Bible as that which accrues from its perpetual use, whether in our own life, or in the conviction of the ungodly.

1 Samuel 22:3 (22a)

Till I know what God will do for me.

We shall never get to the end of all that God will do for us, if only we perfectly give ourselves up to Him. David had a very imperfect vision of all that was in God’s plan for him; he had an inkling, but that was all. And we have still less. Yet let us recapitulate some of the things which God will do for us.

He waits to give us the spirit of Sonship: so that we may ever be conscious of His Fatherhood, and look up into His face in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the Mount of Transfiguration alike, calling Him Abba, Father.

He longs to lead us to full consecration; to lead us into such close association with Jesus in His redeeming purpose, that we may become His willing bond-servants, with no other purpose and aim in life than His service and glory.

He desires to deliver us from all known sin: that we may be blameless and harmless, His children without rebuke in this sinful world, who walk before Him in holiness and righteousness all our days.

He wants to anoint us with the Holy Spirit: so that our ministry to men may have more of the savor of Christ; may plough deeper furrows in human hearts; may have more abiding results.

He desires us to come into partnership with His Son— here in His redemptive purpose, yonder in His throne. To this indeed He calls us.

Who can know all that God waits to do, not here only, but yonder, when life has entered upon its eternal stage! “Now are we children of God; and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be” (1 John 3:2, r. v.).

1 Samuel 23:9

He said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.

David was passing through one of the most awful experiences of his life, when his men spoke of stoning him instead of taking up his cause. How many times in this chapter we are informed that David inquired of the Lord! Some three or four times the appeal for direction was renewed, as though he were fearful to stir one step by the light of his own unaided wisdom. In that changeful life of his, it must have been extremely difficult to set the Lord always before him, and await Divine direction. Many a time his circumstances might seem to demand immediate action rather than prayer; and the rude soldiery must have insisted on their voice being heard rather than a priest’s; but David was not deterred by one or the other, and still held to his practice of consulting the Urim and Thummim stone, set in the ephod; which was probably a splendid diamond, flashing with God’s distinct “Yes,” or growing cloudy and dark with His definite “No.”

Let us inquire of the Lord. The answer will surely come, if we wait for it. If we are not sure of it, let us still wait, for it will come— not so early as to save us from using our faith, not so late as to permit us to be overwhelmed. Direction will come in the growing conviction of duty, in the drift of circumstances, in the advice of friends, in the perceptions of a sanctified judgment. None that wait on God can be ashamed. Whether our duty be to arise and pursue, to sit still, or to escape— “the meek He will guide in judgment; the meek He will teach His way.” He gives, us a white stone in which a name is written, which only they know who receive.

1 Samuel 24:5

And David's heart smote him.

It is well to have a tender conscience, and to obey its least monitions, even when men and things militate against it. Here was an opportunity for David and his band to end their wanderings and hardships by one thrust of the spear but though it was a very small thing that he had done, David was struck with remorse for having taken advantage of Saul's retirement in the precincts of the cave, where his men and he were hiding, and cut off a piece of his robe.

It was a trifling matter, and yet it seemed dishonoring to God's anointed king; and as such it hurt David to have done it. We sometimes in conversation and criticism cut off a piece of a man's character, or influence for good, or standing in the esteem of others. Ought not our heart to smite us for such thoughtless conduct? Ought we not to make confession or reparation?

Circumstances seemed to favor it.— Of all the scores of caves in the neighborhood, the king had happened to choose the very one, in the dark recesses of which David and his men were sheltering. What more natural than to obtain some token to convince the king how absolutely he had been in his young rival's power? But favoring circumstances do not justify an act which is not perfectly healthy and right. Opportunity does not make a wrong thing right.

His men unanimously approved the act, nay, they wanted him to go further. Their standard was a very low one, not only in this case, but in others. How wonderful that David kept such a high ideal amid such comrades! We shall not be judged hereafter by the standard which obtained among our comrades.

1 Samuel 25:31

This shall be no grief unto thee.

There was an inimitable blending of woman's wit with worldly prudence in the words of the beautiful Abigail. Poor woman, she had had a sorry life of it, mated to such a man as Nabal was! An ill-assorted pair certainly, though probably she had had no hand in bringing about the alliance. Like so many Eastern women, she was the creature of another's act and choice. But she succeeded in averting the blow which David was hasting to inflict, by asserting her belief that the time was not far distant when he would no longer be a fugitive from his foes, and by suggesting that when that happy time came it would be a relief to feel that he had not allowed himself to be carried to all lengths by his hot passion.

It was very salutary advice. Let us always look at things from the view-point of the future, when our passion shall have subsided, when time shall have cooled us, and especially when we review the present from the verge of the other world— how then?

We can well afford to do this since God is with us, and our life is bound up with Him in the bundle of life. Abigail reminded David that God would do to him all the good of which He had spoken, and would sling out his enemies as from a sling. So God will do for us; not one good thing will fail of all that He hath promised; no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper. Within a little, Nabal was dead, and David's wrong righted. So shall the evil that now molests us pass away. God will deal with it. Let us leave it to Him: before Him mountains shall melt like wax; and we shall have nothing to regret.

1 Samuel 26:21

Then said Saul, I have sinned.

The Apostle makes a great distinction, and rightly, between the sorrow of the world and the sorrow of a godly repentance which needeth not to be repented of. Certainly Saul's confession of sin belonged to the former; whilst the cry of the latter comes out in Psalm 51, extorted from David by the crimes of after years.

The difference between the two may be briefly summarized in this, that the one counts sin a folly and regrets its consequences; whilst the other regards sin as a crime done against the most Holy God, and regrets the pain given to Him. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight."

Obviously Saul's confession was of the former description, "I have played the fool." He recognized the unkingliness of his behavior, and the futility of his efforts against David. But he stayed there, stopping short of a faithful recognition of his position in the sight of God, as weighed in the balances of eternal justice.

Many a time in Scripture do we meet with this confession. The Prodigal, Judas, Pharaoh, David, and Saul, uttered it; but in what differing tones, and with what differing motives! We need to winnow our words before God; not content with using the expressions of penitence, unless we are very sure that they bear the mint-mark of heaven, and deserve the Master's Beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

When sin is humbly confessed, the Savior assures us: "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee; go in peace." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 Samuel 27:1

And David said, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul.

What a fit of despondency and unbelief was here! We can hardly believe that this is he who in so many Psalms had boasted of the shepherd care of God, who had so often insisted on the safety of God's pavilion. It was a fainting fit, brought on by the bad air he had breathed amid the evil associations of Adullam's cave. Had not God promised to take care of him? Was not his future already guaranteed by the promises that he should succeed to the kingdom? But nothing availed to check his precipitate flight into the land of the Philistines.

Bitterly he rued this mistake. The prevarication and deceit to which he was driven; the anguish of having to march with Achish against his own people; the sack and burning of Ziklag these were the price he had to pay for his mistrust. Unbelief always brings many other bitter sorrows in its train, and leads the soul to cry,

"How long, O Lord? Wilt Thou forget me forever? How long wilt Thou hide thy face from me?"

Let us beware of losing heart, as David did. Look not at Saul, but at God, who is omnipotent; not at the winds and waves, but at Him who walks across the water; not at what may come, but at that which is— for the glorious Lord is roundabout thee to deliver thee. He shall deliver thy soul from death, thine eyes from tears, and thy feet from falling. He that has helped will help. What He has done, He will do. God always works from less to more, never from more to less. Dost thou not hear— hast thou not heard— his voice saying, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee? What, then, can man do unto thee? Every weapon used against thee shall go blunt on an invisible shield!

1 Samuel 28:18

Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, therefore...

Thus unforgiven sin comes back to a man. We cannot explain the mysteries that lie around this incident; but it is clear that in that supreme hour of Saul's fate, that early sin, which had never been confessed and put away, came surging back on the mind and heart of the terror-stricken monarch. "Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, and didst not execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover the Lord will deliver Israel also with thee into the hands of the Philistines" (r. v.). But Saul did not realize that even then the gates of God's love stood open to him, if only he would pass through them by humble penitence and faith. If instead of applying to the witch, he had sought God's mercy, light would have burst on his darkened path, and he had never perished by his own hand on Mount Gilboa.

In strong contrast with this, let us put the assurance of the new covenant: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." When God forgives, He blots out from the book of His remembrance. The sin is gone as a pebble in the ocean; as a cloud in the blue of a summer's sky.

Saul's was a sin of omission. The question was not what evil he had done, but the good he had failed to do. Let us remember that we need pardon for the sad lapses and failures of our lives, equally as for the positive transgressions. And if such things are not forgiven, they will lie heavy on our consciences when the shadows of death begin to gather around us. The New Testament especially judges those who knew and did not do— the slothful servant, the virgin without the oil, the priest that passed by on the other side.

1 Samuel 29:3

What do these Hebrews here?

It was a very natural remark. The Philistines were going into battle with the Hebrew king and his troops, and it was very anomalous that a strong body of Hebrews should be forming part of the Philistine array. They had no business to be there. The annoyance of the chief captains and lords that surrounded Achish was natural enough. For long, probably, it had been smoldering; now it broke out into flame.

It is very terrible when the children of the world have a higher sense of Christian propriety and fitness than Christians themselves, and say to one another, "What do these Hebrews here? The word "Hebrew" means one that has passed over—a separatist. The death of our Lord Jesus was intended to make all His followers separatists. Through Him they have passed from death unto life; they have been delivered out of the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The appeal of His cross to us all is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." Too often, however, that call is unheeded; and, for fear of man, we

mingle with the ranks of the enemies of our Lord.

If Christians attend the theater; if Sunday-school teachers, elders or deacons of a church, are found participating in the pleasures of the ungodly; if the young Christian man is found loosely consorting with the card-players of the smoking-room of an ocean steamer—may not the sneer go round, “What do these Hebrews here? “What doest thou here, Elijah!” is the remonstrance of God. “What do these Hebrews here?” that of the world, which not unfrequently has a truer sense of propriety than God’s professing followers.

1 Samuel 30:6

David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

His God! Doubtless the chronicler heard him say repeatedly, as he was so fond of saying, “My God, my God.” “I will say unto God, my rock, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Though he had seriously compromised God’s cause, by the failure of his faith, by consorting with Achish and the Philistines, by a tortuous and treacherous policy, yet God was still his God; and, in the supreme crisis which had overtaken him, he naturally betook himself to the covert of those loving wings.

He encouraged himself.— He would go back on promises of forgiveness and succor, which had so often cheered him in similar straits. He would recall his songs in former nights as black as this, and therefore would have hope. He would remember that he had been brought through worse trials; and surely He who had helped him against Goliath and Saul would not fail him against the Amalekites. Besides, he had probably left his dear ones in the protection of the encamping angel; and though his faith might be tried, it could not be entirely disappointed. In this way he encouraged himself. All around was tumult and fear; but in God peace and rest brooded, as swans on a tranquil lake. His men might speak of stoning him; his heart be greatly distressed for wives and children; his life be in jeopardy: but God was a very present help. “Why art thou cast down, and disquieted, O my soul? Hope thou in God.”

In similar circumstances, let us have resort to similar sources of comfort; hide in God, and encourage ourselves in Him. It was in this spirit that John Knox, when about to face death, said to his wife, “Read to me where I first cast anchor.”

1 Samuel 31:11-12

All the valiant men...

This was a noble and generous act. At the beginning of his reign, in the early dawn of youthful promise and prowess, when he was the darling of the nation, Saul had interposed to deliver their beleaguered city. And now, as the awful tidings of his defeat and suicide spread like fire through the country, the men whom he had succored remembered his first kingly act, and showed their appreciation for his kindness by doing a strong and chivalrous deed in rescuing his remains from dishonor. They could not help him, but they could save his honor. When David heard of this act, he sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, thanking them for their chivalrous devotion to the memory of the fallen king, and promising to requite the kindness as one done to the entire nation, and to himself.

Are we careful enough of the honor and name of our dear Lord? He has done for us spiritually all that Saul did for Jabesh-Gilead, and more. He has delivered our soul from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. Let us be swift to maintain the honor of His name among those who are so apt at making it their scorn.

It was well that these men did not wait for others to act. Had they done so, the body of Saul might have rotted piecemeal on the walls of the temple at Bethshan. If they had left this act of reparation for Abner, or Ish-bosheth, it would never have been done. There is no order of precedence, when a wrong has to be righted, or a friend vindicated. The man who is next must act. Let us strike into the fray, and count that our opportunity is warrant enough. He who can, may.