

May 1

Saul

1 Samuel 15:1-3, 10-21

What's that noise?

Saul fought against the enemies of Israel and won every battle. One day, Samuel said to Saul, "The Lord says that you must attack the Amalekites and completely destroy everything they own—don't leave a thing!"

So, Saul went out and defeated the Amalekites but he did not kill the best sheep and cattle or destroy things that were good. His army only destroyed what was worthless. Early the next morning, Samuel went to see Saul and asked, "What is all that mooing and bleating I hear?"

Saul explained, "My men kept the best sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord, but we did destroy the weak and unwanted."

"Stop!" Samuel said, "I will tell you what the Lord said to me last night. He told you to destroy everything, but you disobeyed the Lord by keeping the best."

"But I did obey the Lord," Saul replied. "We fought and killed all the Amalekites."

"You did not obey the Lord's instructions fully," Samuel said, "and so He has rejected you as king of Israel."

Is it okay to obey most of God's commands?

Most kids in your grade would probably be happy to get eight out of ten questions right in a test. To pass a class test, you may not even need to score as high as that. What do you think God's pass mark for obedience would be? Would obeying just some of God's commands—or even most of them—be good enough?

Not doing what God wants us to do is as much a sin as doing what God has forbidden us to do (James 4:17). When it comes to obeying God, we must do *everything* He says! Even if we disobey in something we may think is small and unimportant, we allow sin to stain our hearts.

Perhaps you have done something that didn't seem so bad at the time, but it bothers you now. Ask the Lord to forgive you; then your heart will be pure, and He can keep blessing and using you.

Verse for today

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. James 2:10

May 2

David

1 Samuel 16:1, 6-13

A young shepherd

Samuel was very sad that Saul had made such a mess of leading God's people. The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you be sad for Saul? I have rejected him as king of Israel. Get some olive oil and go to Jesse who lives in Bethlehem, for I have chosen one of his sons as king."

When Samuel arrived at Jesse's house and saw his eldest son Eliab, he thought; surely this is the one God has chosen. But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at how tall and handsome he is. I do not judge people by what they look like—I look at the heart."

One by one, each of Jesse's seven sons came to show themselves to Samuel; but the Lord turned each one down. "Do you have any more sons?" Samuel asked Jesse.

"I only have one more, but he is my youngest. He is a shepherd out in the field." So Samuel told Jesse to send for him.

When David came in, the Lord said to Samuel, "This is the one—anoint him." So Samuel took the olive oil and anointed David in front of all the others; and the Spirit of the Lord came on David and filled him.

What does anoint mean?

Whenever God chose someone to do a special task, a servant of the Lord would anoint the person for the task God wanted him to do. All God's prophets, priests, and kings were anointed before they started serving Him.

At a special ceremony, oil would be poured on the person's head as a sign of God's Spirit being poured on the new leader. From that time on, the Spirit would give that person the power and ability to do what God wanted him to do.

Verse for today

Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor." Luke 4:18a

May 3

David

Psalm 23:1-6

A good shepherd

After Samuel had anointed David, he left and went back to Ramah, while David went back to his father's flock of sheep in the fields.

Day and night David stayed with his sheep to make sure they were well cared for. He let his sheep graze in fields of lush grass. He led them to quiet streams where the rushing water would not frighten them. He used his rod to scare off wild animals and his staff to gently lead the sheep away from places that were unsafe.

David wrote a psalm about God. He thought about the Lord as a Shepherd looking after him, just as he was looking after his father's sheep.

Why does Jesus call us sheep?

Have you been on a sheep farm or seen a flock of sheep grazing in a field? Perhaps you have seen a painting or photo of a shepherd leading his flock of sheep. Sheep don't seem very bright, do they? If someone at school were to call you a sheep, you would probably feel rather upset. Why would Jesus call us sheep if He knew we'd be embarrassed to think of ourselves as sheep?

Like sheep, we need to follow a shepherd, otherwise we would end up following each other and get lost (Luke 15:4-6). Like sheep, we cannot defend ourselves (1 Peter 5:8). Like sheep, we don't know where the dangers lie (Proverbs 3:26).

Don't worry too much about being called a sheep—you have the best Shepherd looking after you. He loves you so much that He gave His life to save you. Besides, those who are not part of His flock are called goats (Matthew 25:32). Now that is something you don't want to be called!

Verse for today

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way... Isaiah 53:6

May 4

David

1 Samuel 17:34-35

A fearless shepherd

One day, while David was taking care of his father's sheep, a lion carried off one of the lambs. When David struck the lion, it turned on him, so he grabbed it by the throat and beat it to death, saving the little lamb.

At another time a bear came to take one of the lambs. David went after the bear and attacked it, rescuing the helpless lamb.

Why would a shepherd risk his life for a silly sheep?

If you were a sheep, would you feel safe having a shepherd like David? David did not only care about his sheep; he was brave and strong enough to protect them!

A shepherd's job is to look after a flock of sheep. However, not all shepherds are the same: there is a good shepherd who will do anything to keep his sheep safe, and one who looks after sheep only because he needs money. Someone who is paid to look after sheep does not care when a wolf comes to snatch away one of the sheep. Even if the sheep scatter, he will not risk his life to bring them back.

Jesus said, "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Because His sheep belong to Him and are precious to Him, Jesus not only *risked* His life, He *gave* His life!

Jesus is the only Shepherd who knows every one of His sheep by name (John 10:3-4). When He calls us, we recognize His voice because we have learned to trust Him.

Jesus is also the Gate (John 10:9). Every sheep that goes through the gate is kept safe because thieves cannot come and steal them. But there are other dangers too: the devil prowls around like a roaring lion. Yet, all those who have entered through Jesus the Gate are part of His flock and are perfectly safe!

Verse for today

Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Psalm 100:3

May 5

David

1 Samuel 16:14-23

A musical shepherd

While David was out in the fields watching his father's sheep, he had lots of time to pray and write beautiful songs of praise to the Lord.

Meanwhile King Saul, who was living in a fancy palace, was not happy. He was moody and miserable most of the time. After Saul disobeyed God, the Spirit of the Lord left him. To make matters worse for Saul, the prophet Samuel had told him that God would take away his kingdom and give it to someone else, someone who loved God.

One of Saul's servants told him that he would feel better if they found someone to play gentle music for him. Another servant happened to know about David and told Saul about his talent for playing the harp. So Saul ordered them to fetch David.

David started playing beautiful music for Saul and Saul liked him. Whenever Saul became grumpy, David's music would calm Saul's spirit and he would feel much better.

What kind of music should I listen to?

The Lord has given people the gift of creating beautiful music. How happy the Lord must be when we make music to honor Him—either by singing or by playing a musical instrument - (Psalm 150:3-6).

The Lord does not mind what your favorite song is or what kind of music you like. The more good music you listen to, the more you will enjoy the different kinds of music from other generations and countries of the world. However, as far as possible, avoid listening to songs that dishonor the Lord by their words (some of which may be difficult to hear and recognize).

Verse for today

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. Ephesians 5:19

May 6

David

1 Samuel 17:1-11, 26

An army scared stiff

The Philistines were at war again. Their army had lined up on one side of a valley; the Israelites had set up camp on the other.

A huge man from the Philistine army came out and challenged the Israelite army. He wore bronze armor and carried a long spear. A soldier walking in front of him carried his shield. The Philistine shouted across the valley to the Israelites; "I dare the Israelite army to choose someone to fight me. If he wins, we will be your slaves; but if I win, you will be our slaves."

When Saul and his men heard Goliath's challenge they were terrified!

Is the enemy of God stronger than I am?

Goliath, a giant in the Philistine army, was enormous. Not even the bravest soldier in Saul's army was willing to take up Goliath's challenge to fight him—no matter how big the reward.

Unlike Goliath, our enemy cannot be seen. We don't know what the devil is planning or what his army is doing. The devil puts his evil plans into the hearts of people who allow him to control them. They then go out and do the devil's dirty work through the evil deeds we see in the world. Only when we see the evil around us do we know how and where the devil is working.

It is foolish to take on the devil's army in our own human strength. Acts 19:11-16 shows the difference between conquering the devil in the strength of the Lord and trying to fight the devil with human strength. It is only with the power of God's Spirit in us that we can fight against the attacks of the devil. When we resist the devil by using the powerful words from the Bible, he runs away from us—defeated! (James 4:7).

Verse for today

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8

May 7

David

1 Samuel 17:16-26

How dare he say that!

Day after day, Goliath mocked the army of the living God; yet not one of the Israelite soldiers was brave enough to fight the Philistine giant. During that time, Jesse asked his youngest son David to take some grain and loaves of bread to his brothers who were in Saul's army.

Early the next morning, David left someone in charge of the sheep and set off for the valley of Elah. When he got there, the Israelites and Philistines were taking up positions for battle. David took the food he had brought to the officer in charge of the food supplies. Then he ran off to look for his brothers and found them—ready for battle. As he talked to them, Goliath the Philistine started challenging the Israelites as he had done before.

"Listen to his challenge," the Israelites said to David as Goliath kept mocking God's people, and God Himself (verse 45).

What should I do when someone mocks God?

Do you feel angry when someone mocks God or laughs at you for believing in Jesus? Do you wish that God would prove Himself in a powerful way right there in front of everyone?

What did Jesus do when He was mocked? (Matthew 27:30-31). He did not defend Himself or threaten those who laughed at Him. What did Jesus do when they insulted him? (Mark 15:29). He forgave them! (Luke 23:34). Jesus could have called down thousands of angels (Matthew 26:53), but instead He chose to show us how much He loves us.

God is patient and merciful—He even loves those who mock and insult Him. When you hear someone mock God, you can ask the person not to talk that way, and you can pray that he or she may find the way to God (maybe by seeing the kindness and love of God in your life).

Verse for today

But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. Matthew 12:36

May 8

David

1 Samuel 17:28-32

Go back to your sheep!

When David heard Goliath challenge anyone from the Israelite army to fight him, he asked some of the men standing around, "What reward will a man get for killing that Philistine?"

Eliab, David's eldest brother, heard David asking about the reward and said angrily, "What are you doing here? What about the sheep you are supposed to be taking care of? You just think you're big stuff! All you want to do is watch the battle."

"What have I done now?" David replied. "I only asked a question."

Some men who heard what David had said went to tell King Saul, who immediately had David brought to him. Then David said to Saul, "No one should be afraid of this Philistine! I will go and fight him."

Am I too young to be useful to God?

David was a young shepherd. He had never used weapons of war—and he definitely wasn't a trained soldier! What chance did David stand against the mightiest warrior in the Philistine army?

However, when someone is willing to trust God for strength, age and size don't matter.

Some may try to discourage you from doing what God wants you to do because they think you are too young. They might say, "Wait until you are older and understand things better." But as we will see from David's life, God uses whatever we have and makes up the difference.

You could collect things for needy people or have some friends over to explore the Bible. Trust God, and He will help you to conquer giants!

Verse for today

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

May 9

David

1 Samuel 17:34-40

The armor of God

King Saul had some doubts about David's ability to fight the huge Philistine. David was just a boy! Yet, no one else had been willing to take on Goliath, so Saul said, "May the Lord be with you." Then he gave David his armor.

David put on Saul's bronze helmet and coat of armor. Then he strapped Saul's sword over the armor. As David walked around he realized that the armor was too heavy for him, so he took the armor off and headed down the valley without it.

How can I protect myself from the devil's attacks?

David was about to face the fiercest warrior in the Philistine army with a stick and a sling. David didn't need *Saul's* armor because he was already wearing *God's* armor. King Saul may have shaken his head in unbelief, but the battle had already been won in David's mind.

You can also be on winning side by putting on God's armor (Ephesians 6:14-17).

THE ARMOR OF GOD

- Tie the *Belt of Truth* tightly around your waist so that you do not get tripped up with wrong ideas about God.
- Protect your heart with the *Breastplate of Righteousness*; let purity and goodness guard your heart from sin.
- Wear the *Gospel of Peace* shoes so that you can spread the Good News of God's love everywhere.
- Carry the *Shield of Faith* so you can stop the burning arrows of doubt and discouragement.
- Put on the *Helmet of Salvation*, which you get when you ask Jesus to become Lord of your life.
- Use the *Sword of the Spirit*, which is God's Word. Use verses from the Bible to defeat your giant.

Verse for today

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Ephesians 6:13

May 10

David

1 Samuel 17:41-51

What a shot!

The Philistine giant could not believe his eyes when he saw David coming toward him. All David had to fight with was his shepherd's stick, a sling and five smooth stones he had found in a stream.

Goliath started walking toward David to get a better look. "What's that stick for?" he asked. "Am I a dog?" He swore at David and said, "I will give your body to the birds and animals to eat!"

David replied, "You have a sword, a spear and a javelin. I come with the Lord God Almighty on my side. Today, everyone will see that the Lord does not need swords or spears to save His people."

David took a stone from his pocket, put it in his sling and hurled it at Goliath. The stone hit Goliath on the head and he fell to the ground. Then David ran up to Goliath and used his sword to cut off his head.

How do I get rid of a giant in my life?

Goliath would just not stop! Day after day he came out to mock the Israelites. Each day he stood there laughing, the Israelites felt more helpless and defeated. If it weren't for Goliath, they may have had the courage to attack the enemy.

You have probably faced many problems and tackled each one with courage. Yet there may be a Goliath-sized obstacle inside you that seems to be there all the time—laughing at you day after day. It may be a bad memory that keeps you from trusting people; it may be a fear that keeps you from doing your best; it may be difficulty with schoolwork; or it may be the way you see yourself. Go get that giant! Pray for courage, then face your problem head-on in God's strength and with God's armor.

Verse for today

For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:4

May 11

David

1 Samuel 17:55-18:5

Best friends

When Saul saw how David had gone out to fight Goliath, he asked the commander of the army to bring David to him so he could find out whose son he was.

From that day on Jonathan, Saul's son, became best friends with David and promised to be his friend forever.

Saul sent David on many raids, and each time David and his group of men went out to fight the enemy, he won the battle. Saul was pleased with David so he made him an officer in his army.

How do good friends become best friends?

To *have* a best friend you must *be* a best friend. Jonathan and David became best friends because their friendship was built on a solid foundation.

Personality: Friends become friends because they like each other—they just seem to fit together. Compare Jonathan's act of courage with David's (1 Samuel 14:1) (1 Samuel 17:36).

Selflessness (sharing): Jonathan gave David what was most special to him (1 Samuel 18:4). When Jonathan gave David his robe, he was taking off the clothes of a prince and putting them on David—he did not mind if David became king. Jonathan also gave David his armor and sword to defend himself.

Trust (loyalty): Jonathan and David trusted each other completely and through their steady trust came a deep loyalty. Jonathan was willing to stick up for David even though it almost cost him his life (Samuel 20:33).

Faith (belief): They had the same strong faith and purpose—to please God in everything. Compare Jonathan's daring trust in the Lord (1 Samuel 14:6) with David's bold trust (1 Samuel 17:37).

Verse for today

*He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend.
Proverbs 22:11*

May 12

David

1 Samuel 18:6-15

Music and cheers

As King Saul's soldiers returned home from their victorious battles with the Philistines, women from the nearby towns would come out to meet King Saul. They made music, danced, and sang a joyful song: "Saul has killed thousands; but David, tens of thousands."

Saul did not like this song at all because it made David look a lot better than him. Saul became angry. "Why do they only sing about thousands for me? Soon they will want David to be their king." From that day on, Saul became very jealous of David and tried to get rid of him; but everyone else liked David because he was such a good leader.

How should I respond to compliments and praises?

How would you feel if you were to receive a medal or a prize for an achievement? It may be hard to describe your mixed emotions as you go up to receive your award in front of a cheering crowd. You may have feelings of joy, pride, nervousness, or even embarrassment.

People respond differently to the compliments and praises they receive for doing something well. There is nothing wrong with accepting a person's kind words and it is polite to thank someone who pays you a compliment. Perhaps you could use the opportunity to give God the glory by thanking Him openly.

When David was praised he did not stop leading his men to victory, neither did he play down his abilities. He did, however, acknowledge that God had helped him (Psalm 54:4). In contrast, the New Testament tells of a king who loved the praises of men. When they called him a god, he just loved it and took all the glory! Well, you can read what happened to him (Acts 12:21-23).

Verse for today

Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ... 2 Corinthians 9:13

May 13

David

1 Samuel 18:17-22, 28-30

Jealousy, courage, and love

David had become popular all over Israel and Saul was jealous of him. He thought, "I will get David to fight in the fiercest battles so that he gets killed by the Philistines—then I will not need to kill him myself."

Michal, one of Saul's daughters, fell in love with David. Saul was pleased when he found out about this and ordered his officers to tell David, "All Saul wants from you as payment to marry Michal is a hundred dead Philistines."

David wasted no time in showing his love for Michal and came back with proof that he had killed two hundred Philistines. So Saul allowed Michal to marry David, but planned to use her to trap him.

What can I hold on to when life becomes hectic?

So much had happened in David's life since he had left his peaceful life as a shepherd to join Saul's army. Do you think David sometimes longed to be back with his sheep in the field?

Within a short time, David had become famous throughout the land. He had also become a commander in Saul's army. As a shepherd he had only heard of the Philistines; now he faced them in battle day after day. Then there was Saul, the jealous king who kept on trying to get rid of him. And now David had married Saul's daughter. It had all happened so fast. Imagine all the different feelings that tumbled around in David's heart.

Life has peaceful moments when we have time to enjoy the little things, when we have time to look at flowers and watch the clouds changing shape. Suddenly things change and we feel unsafe, like a small boat being tossed about on a stormy sea.

For David, there was only one thing that would never change: the fact that God was in control of his life. God loved him and would always be there for him. Knowing that made all the difference!

Verse for today

*You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.
Isaiah 26:3*

May 14

David

1 Samuel 19:9-18

An idol in bed

One day, Saul was in one of his bad moods again. He was sitting with his spear in his hand, listening to David playing on his harp. As a deep hatred and anger filled Saul's heart, he lifted his spear and threw it at David. David jumped out the way and ran for his life.

Then Saul sent his men to watch David's house and kill him the next day. Michal, his wife, warned him: "If you don't escape tonight, they will kill you in the morning." Then she helped David escape through a high window and put a life-sized idol in his bed.

When Saul's men came to get David, Michal told them that he was sick. But when the men went back to tell Saul he said, "Carry him here in his bed so that I can kill him." So the men went back to fetch David and discovered that it was only an idol in the bed. Saul was furious that his own daughter had tricked him and that she had let David escape.

Was David afraid of Saul?

David had not been afraid to face Goliath, who was far bigger and fiercer than King Saul. If David had the courage to face Goliath, why was he so afraid of someone like Saul? Why would he run away from him?

David's courage came from knowing that he was doing what God wanted him to do. When he faced Goliath, there was no doubt in his mind about what God wanted him to do.

David also knew that, although God had chosen him to be the next king, his time to rule had not yet come (1 Samuel 24:6). He was not going to take over from God and do things on his own, as Saul had done. He was waiting for God's perfect time, but while waiting, his life was in danger and so he decided to get out of Saul's way.

Verse for today

*My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me.
Psalm 31:15*

May 15

David

1 Samuel 20:17-23, 33-40

An arrow for David

Saul had arranged a feast for one of the regular celebrations. David was expected to attend the feast, but instead he decided to hide in the fields for a few days. He said to Jonathan, "If your father asks where I am, tell him that I have gone home to Bethlehem." Then they arranged that Jonathan would go to the field and give David a signal that would show whether it was safe for David to return to Saul, or whether he should run away.

When Saul, who had planned to kill David, found out that David was not at the feast he was furious. He shouted at Jonathan for being David's friend and threw a spear at him. So Jonathan went out to where David was hiding and shot some arrows. Then he called to his servant, "Isn't the arrow still further away? Hurry up!" These words were a sign to David that his life was in danger and that he should run for his life.

Why did David have to wait so long to become king?

Samuel had anointed David as the new leader of God's people. David had proved his courage by defeating Goliath and winning many battles. He was also a respected leader and commander in the army. What is more, Samuel told Saul that God had rejected him as king of Israel.

Time was passing, and nothing seemed to be happening. What was the hold up?

As humans, we cannot know or understand God's complete plan. Often we only see the obvious, not what God is doing to prepare the hearts of people. To prepare a heart that is faithful takes time. It may take years for God to bring about the changes that will make us ready to do the task He has planned for us.

Verse for today

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 1 Peter 5:6

May 16

David

1 Samuel 25:1-13

A mean sheep owner

One day, Nabal, a rich man who owned land and many sheep, prepared a feast for his family and his shepherds. David, who had protected Nabal's shepherds from thieves and enemy raiders, sent some of his men to ask Nabal for a donation of food or whatever he had.

Nabal refused to give David's men a single thing and sent them away saying, "Who is David? I don't even know him."

When David's servants told him what Nabal had said, David was furious and commanded four hundred of his men; "Put on your swords and come with me."

How do quarrels start?

A quarrel starts when two or more people disagree about something. Each one believes that he or she is right and an exchange of angry words may eventually end in a fight.

Do you remember how the first quarrel between two people started? They were brothers. Cain was jealous of Abel because Abel's sacrifice was pleasing to the Lord, and his was not. Instead of doing what was right, the jealousy that burned in Cain's heart led him to kill his brother.

The sinful desires of selfishness, pride, revenge, and jealousy stir up angry emotions that keep us from thinking clearly. Because we are selfish, we don't try to understand how the other person sees things, which brings about misunderstanding.

Do you think Nabal should have given David some food? Did he even know David, or had he asked David to keep his shepherds safe?

Do you think David had a right to ask for food? When he didn't get it, did he have the right to threaten or kill Nabal?

To avoid quarrels we should try to see things the way the other person would, and not think we are always right.

Verse for today

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? James 4:1

May 17

David

1 Samuel 25:18-19, 23-31

The peacemaker

Abigail wasted no time in thinking of a plan to stop David and his men from killing her husband Nabal. She took two hundred loaves of bread, some wine, five sheep, grain, and cakes of raisins and figs. She loaded everything on donkeys and told her servants to go on ahead. She didn't tell Nabal that she was going out to meet David.

When Abigail saw David coming, she bowed down with her face to the ground. "My master," she said, "let me take the blame for what has happened and do not pay any attention to what Nabal said. The Lord will make you king because you are fighting His battles. Please take this present and do not take Nabal's life. And when the Lord has made you king of Israel, you won't have to feel guilty for having taken someone's life unnecessarily."

Then David said, "Praise the Lord who sent you to me today. Thank God for your good sense and for keeping me from taking revenge."

How can I end a quarrel between my friends?

How does one stop a fight or a quarrel without becoming part of it, making things worse, or taking sides? Abigail knew that unless she did something, someone was going to get hurt. Let's see what she did to bring peace to an ugly situation:

- She didn't take sides. Although Abigail was married to Nabal, she tried to understand the way David felt.
- She made an effort. Abigail gave of her own food, worked out a clever plan, and used her servants (see verse 18-19).
- She was willing to take a risk. She put herself between Nabal and David (see verse 23-24).
- She helped David see the bigger picture. Abigail convinced him not to do something he would regret later (see verse 30-31).

Verse for today

Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. James 3:18

(Important for you to know: It is not your responsibility to sort out quarrels between adults!)

May 18

David

1 Samuel 26:1-12, 17-21

While the king slept

Some men came to Saul and told him that David was hiding in the desert. So Saul went out with three thousand of his best soldiers to track David down.

David and the men with him were hiding in a cave. That night, David asked one of his men to go with him to Saul's camp. So David and Abishai crept into the camp where Saul and his soldiers were sleeping. Abishai said to David, "God has put the enemy in your power. Let me kill him."

But David said, "No! God has made him king. It is not right for us to take his life. But let's take his water jug and his spear and get out of here."

They left the camp without waking a single soldier. Then David crossed to the other side of the valley and shouted to Saul's commander, "Abner! Aren't you the greatest man in Israel? Why did you not protect your master, the king? Look around you. Where is the king's shield and where is his water jug?"

When Saul heard that it was David, he was ashamed of what he was doing. "I have done wrong," he said. "I will never harm you again because you have spared my life." So David went on his way and Saul returned home.

Should I respect ungodly leaders?

Imagine if there were no traffic officers to stop people who ignore the rules of the road, or imagine if there weren't any rules at all. People would drive on the wrong side of the road and race through intersections, not caring for the safety of others.

If a traffic officer does not believe in God it does not give us the right to disobey or ignore him. Similarly, our parents, teachers, and everyone else who keeps order in our country should be obeyed and respected—whether they believe in God or not.

Verse for today

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. Hebrews 13:17

May 19

David

1 Samuel 30:1-3, 16-25

The raid

One day, when David and his men got back to the town where they were staying, they found that the Amalekites had attacked the town, burnt everything, and taken the women and children. David prayed and asked the Lord, "Shall we go after the raiders and will we catch them?" The Lord answered and told David to go after them.

So David and his men set out to find the Amalekites, but along the way, some of David's men were too exhausted to carry on and stayed behind. The others went on and attacked the raiders, taking all their possessions. They also rescued their wives and children.

When those who had gone out to fight got back, they didn't want to share what they had brought back with those who had stayed behind. But David said, "Everyone must get the same; those who guarded the supplies must get the same as those who went into battle."

Is everyone's work for the Lord equally important?

One would think that David's defeat of the Amalekites was far more important than looking after sheep? Surely, a shepherd's task of guarding sheep is not as important as defending people against their enemies. Yet to God the most important thing is not the size of the task, but whether we are obedient and faithful. God was just as pleased with David while he was a shepherd as when he was out fighting Israel's enemies.

Each of us has been given a task in God's kingdom. When we do it well, God trusts us with another, maybe bigger and more difficult task. When David had proved his faithfulness and courage by looking after his father's sheep, the Lord knew that he was ready for another task—looking after His people.

Verse for today

The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. 1 Corinthians 3:8

May 20

David

2 Samuel 1:1-12

Tragedy strikes

When David came back from his battle with the Amalekites, a young man arrived with bad news.

The Philistines had attacked Saul's army on the mountain of Gilboa. The fighting was fierce and in the chaos of battle, an arrow hit and wounded Saul. Saul killed himself by falling on his own sword. Jonathan and his brothers also died in the battle, together with those who had not fled.

When David heard about the death of Saul and Jonathan, he tore his clothes and cried bitterly until evening.

How can I comfort a friend when someone has died?

You would probably feel a little uneasy talking to a friend who has lost someone through death. It would seem out of place to talk about everyday things, and yet it may feel awkward to talk about death. When you meet your friend, you need not try to look or feel as sad as she does, but rather show your genuine care.

Sometimes it is best not to say too much, but just to sit quietly with your friend. She will feel your love even though you don't say much. If your friend would like to talk, ask her what she admires most about the person who died, or ask her to tell you about the fun times that she remembers having together.

Tell your friend how it makes you feel to see her so sad. You can tell her that God loves her very much and feels sad with her. Encourage her to tell God how she feels. If your friend doesn't feel like praying, you could ask if it would be okay to say a prayer for her. Pray that God will help her to feel His great love, and thank Him for the hope we have of being together one day in Heaven.

Verse for today

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23:4

May 21

David

2 Samuel 5:1-7, 9-10

David becomes king

David was thirty years old when the leaders of the tribes of Israel came to him and said; "You are one of us. Even when Saul was our king, you led the people of Israel into battle, and the Lord also promised that you would rule His people."

Then they anointed David as their king and he ruled Israel for forty years. David captured the walled city of Jerusalem and ruled from there. The city became known as The City of David.

How can I let Jesus be King of my life?

Would you like to have a real king in your life and become part of his kingdom? You can! You can let the King of the whole universe rule in your life from this moment on. He is the best King you could ever have—a King who loves you, who is powerful, who is completely fair—and a king who lives forever.

The King wants you to:

- obey Him (John 14:23)
- serve him (John 15:16)
- be loyal to Him (Luke 16:13)

The King will:

- keep you safe (John 10:28)
- let you live in peace (John 14:27)
- give you what belongs to Him (Romans 8:17)
- give you a new life that never ends (John 3:16)

All you need to do is tell Jesus that you want Him to be your King. By doing that you become part of God's Kingdom and receive a big gift! You receive ETERNAL LIFE. When you ask Jesus to become King of your life and you allow Him to rule in your heart, His Spirit comes to live in you. From that moment on, He will never leave you: He will always be there to guide you and help you do what is right.

Verse for today

I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Psalm 145:1

May 22

David

2 Samuel 6:1-11

The Covenant Box comes back

Now that David was king at last, his first thought was to bring the Covenant Box back to where it could be kept safe. It was still at Abinadab's home. David's men took it and placed it on a cart drawn by oxen. Everyone was dancing and making a joyful noise.

As they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out to take hold the Covenant Box. The Lord God was angry with Uzzah for touching the box, and Uzzah died there next to it. David was angry because the Lord had punished Uzzah; but he was also afraid, so he took the box to the house of Obed-Edom.

Could the Word of God ever disappear?

Do you remember what Moses put inside the Covenant Box? Look up 1 Kings 8:9 to see what it was—and if it was still there? Yes, after all this time the commandments were still in the box because the Lord was very strict about anyone touching it. Only the priests, whose special job it was to carry the Ark of the Covenant, were allowed to touch it.

The commandments were more than just a set of rules. God had made a promise (covenant) that those who keep His rules will be His people, and that He will love them and care for them (Psalm 103:17-18).

God has given us the Bible with commands and promises: commands we must obey, and promises that God will keep. He has also given a strict warning to anyone who tries to change a single word in the Bible (Revelation 22:18-19). That is why we can trust what God has told us in the Bible and be assured that His Word will never disappear.

Verse for today

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Matthew 24:35

May 23

David

2 Samuel 6:12-19

Dancing with joy

The Lord blessed Obed-Edom and his family while the Covenant Box was at his house. After a few months, when David heard how the Lord had blessed him, he went out with some of his men to fetch it.

Then David and the Israelites took the Covenant Box to Jerusalem with shouts of joy and the sound of trumpets. As the box was brought into Jerusalem, David danced and jumped around with joy. Afterwards, he gave everyone bread, meat and raisins to celebrate the happy occasion.

How can I show my joy in worship?

What do sports fans do when their team wins a nail-biting match? What do you do when you get really excited? Do you feel like jumping up and down, or shouting out aloud?

If you get excited about praising God, you might find it difficult to sit completely still and not even tap your foot. That is how David felt when the Covenant Box came home. He was overjoyed and so was everyone else. The people were shouting with joy and blowing trumpets.

God loves it when we get excited about Him, just as He gets excited about us (Zephaniah 3:17). When you worship God, you can clap (Psalm 47:1); you can sing and shout (Psalm 108:1); and you can make music and dance (Psalm 149:3). You should remember, though, that your worship should be honoring to the Lord. You should never become disrespectful by the way you show your enthusiasm.

David's wife, who was watching him as he entered the city, was not happy with the way he danced in front of everyone. But David did not mind about what she thought, and he was not embarrassed by what he did, because he was dancing to honor the King of kings.

Verse for today

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. Ephesians 5:19

May 24

David

2 Samuel 7:1-7, 12-13

A palace and a tent

Things started to settle down in the palace. The Lord had kept David safe from his enemies, and now he was king of Israel. However, David started feeling a little uneasy in his heart. He called the prophet Nathan and said, "Here I am, living in a beautiful palace while God's Covenant Box is being kept in a tent."

Nathan replied, "Do whatever you are thinking because the Lord is with you."

But that night the Lord said to Nathan, "Tell David that he is not the one to build the Temple for Me to live in. I will make one of his sons king and he will build the Temple for Me."

Is a church building important?

If God is everywhere, why was it so important for David to build a Temple for the Lord to live in?

If we can pray to the Lord and read our Bibles wherever we like, why is it important to go to a church building?

The Bible tells us that all those who believe in Jesus are a part of His body, the Church. That means every believer fits into a special place like a living stone in His Temple. (1 Peter 2:4-5).

But if we, as living stones, are scattered all over the place and never get together, no one would even know that we are part of one big Church. If we only watched a preacher on TV or listened to a sermon on the radio, it just wouldn't be the same as going to worship the Lord together with other believers.

Although a building is not important, the fact that we should get together is important—whether it is under a tree, in a tent, or in a beautiful stone building. When we get together, God is there!

Verse for today

I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." Psalm 122:1

May 25

David

2 Samuel 7:18-22, 25-29

David's prayer

After Nathan told David that the Lord wanted one of his sons to build the Temple, David was very happy. He went to the Tent of the Lord and prayed.

David said to the Lord: "I am not worthy of what You have done for me. Now You are doing even more by making this promise about my son. You have done these things to teach me. How great you are Sovereign Lord. There is none like You! And now Sovereign Lord, do what You have promised."

Can a king have a king?

Is there anyone greater than a king? Would you dare to go tell a king that he is actually not the greatest? Probably he would not be very happy to find out that he is not the greatest after all.

David realized that there is someone much greater. Even though he was the king of a great nation, he knew that God had put him there and that God could replace him.

David learned that joy and peace come from knowing that there is someone higher and more powerful than him. The joy he had felt as a shepherd was still in his heart, and even now that he was king, he still relied on God. David said, "Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray" Psalm 5:2.

When David was a shepherd he thought like a shepherd and prayed to God as being His Shepherd (Psalm 23).

Now that David was a king, he thought like a king and spoke to God as His Sovereign Lord (verse 27). By calling God Sovereign, he was saying that God is his King, and because David himself was a king, it makes God the King of kings.

Verse for today

On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Revelation 19:16

May 26

David

2 Samuel 9:1-13

Adopted as his son

One day David asked, "Is there anyone of Saul's family still living, because I would like to show him kindness for the sake of Jonathan." Jonathan, David's best friend had been killed in a battle.

Ziba, one of Saul's servants told David that Jonathan had a son Mephibosheth (try saying Muh-fib-o-sheth).

At the age of five, when news of Saul and Jonathan's death reached the city, the nurse who had been looking after Mephibosheth picked him up and fled. She was afraid that he would be killed too. But as she ran she tripped and dropped him. Mephibosheth became crippled in both legs.

When Mephibosheth was brought before David, David said, "Don't be afraid, I will be kind to you for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will give you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul." And from that day on Mephibosheth ate at David's table as though he was one of his very own sons.

Can I belong to two families?

Do you know what it means to be adopted? A son or daughter can be taken in by a new family and become a true child of that family, even though he or she was not born into that family.

When Mephibosheth was adopted into David's family, he was treated as if he had been born into David's family. From one day to the next he became a king's kid.

There is no need for a family to adopt you if you already have parents looking after you. But you can be adopted into God's family and still stay part of your family. When Jesus rules in your heart, you are a child of the King of kings as well!

Verse for today

... In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. Ephesians 1:4-5

May 27

David

2 Samuel 12:1-10, 13

The stain

One evening, while David was walking on the flat roof of his palace, he saw a beautiful woman having a bath. He told his servants to find out who she was and bring her to the palace. When David found out that she was married and that her husband was in his army fighting the Ammonites, he sent a message to the commander telling him to move Uriah to the front ranks where the fighting was fiercest. David wanted Uriah to get killed so he could marry his wife Bathsheba.

Uriah did get killed and David married Bathsheba. What he had done was wrong in the Lord's eyes. So the Lord sent the prophet Nathan to show David how that he had taken something very precious from someone else. Then David confessed his sin and said, "I have sinned against the Lord."

Will the Lord ever forgive me for something really bad?

Do you have old clothes that are stained? Maybe there is a blob of ink or paint that just won't go away completely, no matter how many times it has been through the wash.

What David did was really bad! He wanted something (someone) that didn't belong to him. He had Uriah killed and brought dishonor to the Lord. Do you think that David deserved to be forgiven after all that the Lord had done for him? No, David did not deserve forgiveness, and neither do we! Not one of us has an excuse for the wrong things we do.

But God is gracious. That means, He will forgive us for every sin—no matter how big it is! However, to be able to forgive us, someone had to take the blame and the punishment for that sin. That person is Jesus. He loves us so much that He chose to be nailed to a cross so that His blood can wash away our sin and make our hearts white as snow.

Verse for today

Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Psalm 51:2

May 28

David

2 Samuel 15:1-13

A rebellion is planned

Absalom, one of David's sons did not follow God. He wanted to be king of Israel, and so he gathered loyal followers around him by pretending to care for them and by sorting out their problems.

Absalom wanted the followers to help him take over the throne of his father David. Eventually the number of Absalom's rebellious followers grew until they had become strong enough to fight David's army.

How does a rebellion start?

A person who rebels is one who goes against the structures and authorities that keep law and order. Structures are the rules, while authorities are people who make up the rules and see to it that people keep them.

A country has laws to protect its people and make it possible for them to live in peace (1 Timothy 2:2). Your school has rules that keep children and teachers focused. Even a home has certain rules to keep the harmony between everyone.

A rebel is one who disobeys the law and disrespects those in authority, whether it is a parent, a teacher, the leaders of a country, or even God Himself.

Before God created man, an angel in heaven decided to rebel against God. God threw him out of heaven down to earth (Isaiah 14:11-12). His name is Satan.

A rebellion starts when Satan puts bad thoughts in the mind of a person. If the person's heart is filled with anger, jealousy or pride then those feelings feed the rebellious thoughts. Bad thoughts lead to bad actions and those actions influence others, and so the rebellion spreads.

Verse for today

Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. Romans 13:2

May 29

David

2 Samuel 18:1-2, 9, 32-33

The king's son dies

Absalom, who wanted to be king, was in a battle against the soldiers of his father's army. While Absalom was riding on a horse through some trees, his head got stuck in the branches, and he hung there helplessly while his horse kept on going. Joab, one of David's men found Absalom and killed him with a spear.

Someone went to King David and said: "Praise the Lord, your son who was fighting against you has been killed."

David went to his room and wept. "Absalom, my son Absalom," he cried. "If only I could have died in your place."

What is the greatest love of all?

Is it unusual for a father to love his son? No, it is natural for a father to love his children. But what if the son hates his father? What if the son gets an army to fight against his father? Surely if a father loves a son even then, his love must be very great. David loved his rebellious son so much that when he heard about Absalom's death, he cried, "If only I could have died in your place" (verse 33). We know that David had the love of God in his heart because Jesus said: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" John 15:13.

The greatest love anyone can show is to give his life for someone else. Jesus did that when he gave His life for you. If you want to know what the greatest love is, then see what the Bible says about God's love. "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" Romans 5:7-8.

Verse for today

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4:10

May 30

Solomon

1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12

An old king and a new king

King David was getting old, so he called his son Solomon to give him some important instructions. "Be confident and be determined," he said. "Do whatever the Lord your God orders you to do. If you obey the Lord's commands, He will keep the promises He has made."

Soon after this, David died and was buried in Jerusalem, the City of David. Solomon took over from David and became king of Israel.

Will I be able to do the difficult things my parents do?

As you watch your mom cooking, or see your dad sorting through piles of bills, do you wonder if you will be able to do all those things that adults do?

The responsibilities that your parents have are too great for you to worry about now!

However, when your parents give you chores to do around the house, they are teaching you to do some of the things that they do. By doing them well, you are showing your parents how responsible you are. They will know when you are ready to do tasks that require greater responsibility.

David taught Solomon to become responsible and gave him all the instructions and plans he would need for building the Temple (see Chronicles 28:10-21).

Your parents are not perfect—just as David was not perfect. So even when they make mistakes, you still need to respect and obey them.

Just as David helped Solomon, your parents are helping you to do practical things like plan, make decisions and save, and they are teaching you to live a life that is right and leads to happiness.

Verse for today

Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Psalm 34:11

May 31

Solomon

1 Kings 3:3-15

A wise choice

Solomon was king. He loved the Lord and tried to please Him in every way. One day he went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices there. That night the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "What would you like me to give you?"

Solomon answered, "I am very young and I don't know how to rule. Please give me the wisdom I need to rule Your people and the ability to know the difference between right and wrong."

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this and said to him, "Because you have asked for wisdom to rule with fairness instead of asking for long life and riches, I will give you what you have asked for. I will give you more wisdom than anyone has ever had or ever will have, and I will also give you great riches and honor which you did not ask for."

Will God give me anything I ask for?

Don't you just love those stories where someone is given three wishes that come true? It is fun to imagine what it would be like to be given a wish like that. If you could ask for anything you liked, what would it be?

What would you tell the Lord if He asked you what you would like, knowing that it was for real, not just a fairy tale?

Jesus said, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you" (John 15:7). Does it really mean that Jesus will give us whatever we wish for?

If we ask for what is good the Lord will hear our prayer. However, He decides how best to answer that prayer. So how do we know what He wants to give us? Look at the first part of what Jesus said. If we remain in Him (stay close to Him) we learn to pray for the kind of things He would be pleased to give us. Remember that the Lord will not give us something that will harm us or something that we are not ready for.

Verse for today

*For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
Proverbs 2:6*