



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

OPPORTUNITY OR TEMPTATION • Learning to Trust God for His Perfect Plan

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

I Samuel 24:1-22

During the last several studies David has fled Saul. During each study, you would have to wonder why David has not taken the opportunity to kill Saul. That would relieve a lot of David's stress, right? Well, in our passage from I Samuel 24, David finally gets a clear shot at taking Saul down. While David is in the wilderness of Engedi, Saul follows him. At one point, nature calls and Saul has to relieve himself. As he's doing his business, David has a chance to strike him with his sword, but he proclaims to his men that he cannot harm the LORD's anointed king. This passage shows the protection and provision of the Lord for those who wait on him, instead of taking matters into their own hands.

David Spares Saul's Life (24:1-7)

After defeating the Philistines, David is on the run again. He returns to the wilderness of Engedi to seek a hiding place from Saul. Somebody rats out David though, telling Saul where he is. Saul and three chosen men go looking for David, but Saul needs to take a pit stop and relieve himself in a cave. Saul picked the one cave that David and his men were hiding in. David's men proclaim, "Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you'" (v. 4). As David cuts the edge of Saul's robe with his sword, his heart sinks, because he is convicted: "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the LORD's anointed" (v. 6). Here we get a glimpse of David's loyalty. Even though Saul has been voraciously seeking his life, David is convinced that it would be wrong from him to take the king of Israel's life. Notice David's conviction, too. He didn't kill Saul, yet still feels bad in his heart that he even considered it. Sin is often not simply a deed; it is an attitude or intention of the heart. Help your group understand that we need to confess and repent of our selfish motives and thoughts, not only our evil actions.

Saul and David's Conversation (24:16-22)

After David spares Saul, he cries out in verses 9-10, "My lord the king...Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Behold, David seeks your harm? Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you.'" David pledges his allegiance to Saul as God's anointed. This shows David's devotion to first, God, second, to his country, and third, to Saul. This is one of the reasons that David is called a man after God's own heart. He wants to be full of integrity and honor in all he does. In David's plea, he communicates that his aim is not to kill

What's the Big Idea?

As David is pursued by Saul, he has a chance to take Saul's life. Not wanting to harm the LORD's anointed, he spares him. David had a chance to end his terrible plight and move on. However, he didn't take this test from God and turn it into evil. This passage shows us that God protects and favors those who trust Him and wait for His perfect plan.

What's the Problem?

Because we often forget that God has a perfect will and plan and that it will come about in His timing, we take matters into our own hands instead of trusting God.



Saul, so Saul should have no desire to kill David. David tells Saul that the Lord will judge between them (vv. 12, 15). Your group members should realize that God is in control of this situation and will have vengeance on the enemies of His people – no matter what has been done to them (cf. Deut. 32:35; Prov. 20:22; Heb. 10:30).

After David finishes, Saul says, “Is that your voice, my son David?” Realizing his stupidity, Saul begins to cry. He even confesses that David is more righteous than himself. “For you have repaid me good,” he said, “whereas I have repaid you evil” (v. 17). This is paraphrased by Paul in Romans 12:21: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Saul only sinks into deeper misery; David is delivered into another stronghold. Help your students embrace that leaving situations in God’s hand – instead of falling in to the temptation to do our will – is the Christlike way to act.

The short lesson of this passage is that God protects and favors those who wait on Him and trust in His perfect plan. God is sovereign over all things and will not let any wicked deed go unpunished. Pray that the group would cling to Christ and trust in Him. Though evil waves may surge all around, He is our rock, our fortress, and our deliverer.

What’s Our Response?

Like David, we should trust in God and wait on his perfect plan, believing that he will lift us up in his time.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 24:1-22

LAUNCH

How can you tell the difference between the Lord's opportunity and the devil's temptation?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 24:1-3

1. Describe the setting in your own words.

Read I Samuel 24:4-7

2. How do David's men interpret this situation?

3. How does David respond to his men's encouragement?

4. What motivates David to keep his men from harming Saul?

Read I Samuel 24:8-15

5. What does David do after Saul leaves the cave?

6. What is the essence of David's words to Saul?

7. In what ways does David express trust in the LORD in his words to Saul?

Read I Samuel 24:16-22

8. How does Saul respond to David?

APPLY

9. Read Matthew 4:1-10. What parallels do you see between David's opportunity to kill Saul and the opportunity Satan gave Jesus?

10. Read Romans 5:10. How does David's treatment of Saul in I Samuel 24:19 look forward to Jesus' treatment of those who trust Him?

11. Read Romans 12:19 and I Peter 5:6. How does David exemplify these commands?

12. How do you see God at work in this chapter, and how does David respond to God's work?

13. How can you relate to the temptation to seize opportunities prematurely and take matters into your own hands instead of waiting for God and His perfect timing?

14. How do David's and Jesus' experiences encourage you to humble yourself under God's mighty hand and trust Him to exalt you at the proper time?

15. Read Philippians 1:8-9. What can you apply from these verses to help you discern between God's opportunities and temptations that don't come from Him?

What Are the Answers?

1. Saul goes into a cave to relieve himself, but David and his men are in the inner recesses of the cave.
2. They conclude that God has given Saul into David's hands.
3. At first he cuts off a corner of Saul's robe. Then he feels guilty and keeps them from harming Saul.
4. David realizes that Saul is the LORD's anointed, his chosen king, and that it's not right for him to harm him in light of that.
5. He follows him out, calls to him, and prostrates himself before him.
6. He assures him he has no evil intentions toward him, evidenced by his having the chance to harm him but not taking it. He questions why he would seek to harm him and commits himself to the LORD.
7. He acknowledges the LORD's providence in letting Saul fall into his hands. He trusts God to judge between him and Saul. He trusts God to deliver him from Saul's hand.
8. He cries out and weeps. He acknowledges that David has been good to him while he has dealt wickedly with David. He also acknowledges that David will someday be king and secures his promise not to kill his descendants once he takes power.
9. Both had an opportunity to receive their kingdom prematurely. Both rejected this opportunity by entrusting themselves to God and relying on the principles of His word.
10. Just as David had mercy on his enemy Saul by sparing his life, so also Jesus has mercy on His enemies by forgiving their sin and sparing their lives.
11. David lets God take vengeance on His enemies instead of taking matters into his own hands. He humbles himself and lets God lift him up in His time.
12. God protects David and orders circumstances in a way that assures David of his favor. David humbles himself before Saul and trusts God's overall plan and timing.
13. Allow the group to discuss.
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

May the LORD judge between me and you, may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes wickedness.' But my hand shall not be against you."

I Samuel 24:12-13