



Community Group Discussion Guide

March 16, 2025

1 Samuel 26: 1-25 | The LORD's Anointed

MOTIVATE

- ⇒ **Starter Question: Why is it important for us to honor those whom God honors? How do we do this?**

DISCUSS

1 Samuel 24-26 contribute to further emphasis on the growing distance between Saul and David. In 1 Samuel 26:1-25, Saul continues to pursue David to kill him, and David again spares Saul's life as he did in 1 Samuel 24. The events of these two chapters have much in common with each other. In both:

- Saul received a report of David's whereabouts.
- Saul pursued David into the deserts of Judah with three thousand soldiers.
- David had opportunity to kill Saul and end this conflict.
- David's men urged him to either kill Saul or allow them to do so.
- David refused to kill Saul himself or to allow others to do so because of David's profound respect for the LORD's anointed.
- Saul and David finished their interaction with Saul admitting his guilt.

- ⇒ ***How does God use repetition in Scripture to make an emphasis? What is being emphasized here?***

1 Samuel 26 is the last recorded time Saul and David—these two anointed ones—saw each other. This text emphasizes the continuing active role of God in David's rise to the throne and in Saul's downfall. The failure of Saul as the God's anointed one is sure, a fact that David himself learned in a new way in this chapter. David's legitimacy as God's anointed is becoming more obvious and is clear from this text because of his reliance on God, in stark contrast to Saul.¹ (See *1 Samuel Overview* for more information.)

- ⇒ **How do we continue to see God's sovereignty in David's life? What does this teach us about God?**

1 Samuel 26:1-4 *Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding himself on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the east of Jeshimon?"* **2** *So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph with three thousand chosen men of Israel to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.* **3** *And Saul encamped on the hill of Hachilah, which is beside the road on the east of Jeshimon. But David remained in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness,* **4** *David sent out spies and learned that Saul had indeed come.*

The Ziphites, people from David's own tribe of Judah, were Saul's informants once before concerning David's location (1 Samuel 23:19–29). They were apparently still spying out David's movements

¹ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 351). Zondervan.

throughout their area of southern Judah to gain the favor of King Saul.² Again, they went to Saul at Gibeah with intelligence that David and his 600 men were hiding near their city. Based on the Ziphites' report, Saul led his force of 3,000 men to the wilderness of Ziph. However, David and his men were safely hidden from Saul. Saul made his camp by the road to the hill of Hachilah, and David remained in the desert. David sent out scouts to confirm Saul's arrival.

- ⇒ **How does Saul continue to show his lack of reliance on God?**
- ⇒ **Why should we take note that David's 600 men are completely outnumbered by Saul's 3,000 men? Why are odds like this not a problem in God's hands?**

1 Samuel 26:5-8 Then David rose and came to the place where Saul had encamped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, with Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army. Saul was lying within the encampment, while the army was encamped around him. **6** Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Joab's brother Abishai the son of Zeruiah, "Who will go down with me into the camp to Saul?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you." **7** So David and Abishai went to the army by night. And there lay Saul sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the army lay around him. **8** Then Abishai said to David, "God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice."

One evening, after Saul and his troops had bedded down for the night, David determined to secretly enter Saul's camp to scout out the king's position. He asked these two men to accompany him:

- Ahimelech the Hittite: The Hittites were a non-Jewish minority within the population of Canaan who frequently interacted with the Israelites from patriarchal times to the end of the monarchy. This Ahimelech should not be confused with Ahimelech the priest. It's noteworthy that Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, was a Hittite.
- Abishai: Son of David's sister Zeruiah and brother of David's general, Joab, Abishai was a loyal and accomplished member of David's mighty fighting men throughout David's reign as king of Israel.

Abishai agreed and he and David quietly made their way past the soldiers and through the personal bodyguards of Saul. Finally, they made it to the spot where Saul and his army commander, Abner, were sleeping. Saul was asleep with his spear stuck in the ground at his head. This was the spear that Saul had used to try to kill David and Jonathan. It was a type of scepter, a symbol of his royalty. Abishai asked for permission to take advantage of Saul's vulnerability by forcefully running Saul through with his own spear.

- ⇒ **Why would it have been significant to kill Saul with the symbol of his kingship?**
- ⇒ **What does Abishai's desire indicate about his opinion of "God's anointed?"**
- ⇒ **Have you ever been more interested in getting vindication than you have been in honoring God?**
- ⇒ **To whom does vengeance ultimately belong? How can remembering this guard your actions?**

² Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 351). Zondervan.

1 Samuel 26:9-12 But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?" **10** And David said, "As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. **11** The LORD forbid that I should put out my hand against the LORD's anointed. But take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go." **12** So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away. No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen upon them.

David did not permit Saul to be harmed because God had chosen Saul to be Israel's king. God might choose to kill Saul as punishment for his sins against David, but David would not be the one to take Saul's life. Though God had anointed David and repeatedly confirmed that he would replace Saul, David knew he must never raise a hand against Saul himself. It would be wrong to kill Saul, even though God condemned him.³ However Saul died, it would be God's doing, not David's.

⇒ ***Discuss this quote: Having learned from Nabal's sudden death in 1 Samuel 25, which benefited him so unexpectedly, David has learned that it is always better to wait patiently for God's timing and methods. Thus, Saul will eventually die by some other means, not by David's hand. This is a much more mature and confident David.***⁴

To prove a point to Saul and with the aid of a "deep sleep" from God, David and Abishai were able to slip into the midst of the camp and take Saul's spear and water jug. The spear symbolized the king's royal status, as was evident from the scene in 1 Samuel 22:6, where Saul appeared seated on a hill at Gibeah, with his royal court around him and with "spear in hand." Taking Saul's spear was another symbolic act of transferring the kingdom from Saul to David.

Without awakening anyone David and Abishai left the camp and crossed over to a nearby hill. It was no tribute to their furtiveness as soldiers that they were able to draw so near to Saul. Once before, Saul was supernaturally hindered from finding David, when the Spirit of God seized him and prevented him from apprehending David (1 Samuel 19:23–24). Here, Saul and his entire regiment were unaware of David's presence because of God-induced sleep. In both episodes, the text emphasizes God's personal and active involvement in David's rise to power.⁵ God caused three thousand soldiers to fall into a stupor, making it possible for David and Abishai to slip into the camp, discuss what they were going to do, take the royal spear and water jug, and make an undetected escape.⁶

⇒ **Why is it vital we remember that both episodes were only possible through the active participation of God Himself?**

⇒ **How does it bring you comfort and bolster your faith to know that God actively participates in your life? Can you give an example of a time when He made this evident to you?**

³ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 354). Zondervan.

⁴ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 355). Zondervan.

⁵ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 352). Zondervan.

⁶ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 355). Zondervan.

1 Samuel 26:13-16 Then David went over to the other side and stood far off on the top of the hill, with a great space between them. **14** And David called to the army, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner answered, "Who are you who calls to the king?" **15** And David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy the king your lord. **16** This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not kept watch over your lord, the LORD's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is and the jar of water that was at his head."

David stopped on the top of a hill some distance away so Saul's army could not reach him. In the darkness David shouted loudly to Saul's men, taunting Saul's commander Abner, chiding them all for falling asleep instead of guarding the king. David was correct. Abner and his men deserved death for sleeping on their watch. It was their job to secure the area for the king. Someone could have come into the camp, just as David had done. But unlike David, they might have taken the life of Saul. To prove that he had been in the camp, David challenged Abner to find the king's spear and the water jug that had been near Saul's head.⁷

⇒ ***How did David continue to show remarkable restraint as well as demonstrating he was a man after God's own heart?***

1 Samuel 26:17-20 Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king." **18** And he said, "Why does my lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? What evil is on my hands? **19** Now therefore let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it is the LORD who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering, but if it is men, may they be cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out this day that I should have no share in the heritage of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' **20** Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth away from the presence of the LORD, for the king of Israel has come out to seek a single flea like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains."

⇒ ***How did Saul address David differently during this interaction than before? How does David refer to himself?***

Saul was awakened by the commotion, and he recognized David's voice. In the ensuing dialogue, David was given the chance once again to plead his innocence before Saul (see also 1 Samuel 24:9-15). David wanted to know what he had done to incur Saul's wrath. David was concerned about the motive behind Saul's pursuit. If the Lord incited Saul against him, then David volunteered to bring an offering to the Lord. If, however, men had incited Saul, then David swore that they be cursed for depriving David of his heritage of the Lord.⁸

⇒ ***How heartbreaking would it have been "for a man after God's own heart" to be told to pursue another god besides Yahweh?***

David again implied that Saul's obsessive pursuit was useless because he, David, was as harmless and trivial as a "flea." The reference to himself as "a partridge in the mountains" seems obscure. But David used an interesting wordplay on Abner's desperate question in verse 14, "Who are you who

⁷ Andrews, S. J., & Bergen, R. D. (2009). [1, 2 Samuel](#) (Vol. 6, p. 171). Holman Reference.

⁸ Andrews, S. J., & Bergen, R. D. (2009). [1, 2 Samuel](#) (Vol. 6, p. 171). Holman Reference.

calls to the king?" The Hebrew for "partridge" is literally "he who calls on the mountains," which is ironically appropriate for David who called to Saul on a mountain. David drew the analogy because the fate of the partridge (or "calling-bird") was to be pursued relentlessly by the fowler, just as Saul was pursuing David.⁹

⇒ **What are your impressions of David's plea for innocence? How do David's words show both discretion and spiritual insight?**

1 Samuel 26:21-25 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake." **22** And David answered and said, "Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and take it. **23** The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the LORD gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against the LORD's anointed. **24** Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the LORD, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation." **25** Then Saul said to David, "Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them." So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.

With the miraculous intervention of God, this encounter ended with Saul admitting his guilt and making more concessions than he had before: I have sinned. I have acted like a fool. I have made a great mistake. Saul acknowledged this in front of his whole army. David ignored Saul's invitation to return to the royal court and his promise not to attack David again. David simply returned Saul's spear and expressed his faith that God would honor and reward his actions and deliver him from trouble.

⇒ **In what ways did David's return of Saul's spear also carry symbolic significance?**

Saul's parting words, "You will do many things and will succeed in them," were more prophetic than Saul could have known and certainly more than he intended. This was the last recorded meeting between the two anointed ones. David "went his way" with the blessing and protection of God. Saul returned home to Gibeah, a king in name only.¹⁰

⇒ **How did David's years as a fugitive teach him to trust God as his ultimate protector? What application can you make to your own life?**

⇒ **How did this act show that David was confidently trusting God to work out the details in His timing to bring Saul's reign to a conclusion and to bring him to the throne in Saul's place?**

⇒ **Do you find it challenging to trust God's timing? Explain your answer.**

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: In the same way that David valued the life of Saul and did not kill him, so David humbly trusted God to value his life and to deliver him from all trouble. The two episodes in which David spared Saul's life are narrated in close proximity, separated only by the Nabal/Abigail object lesson in 1 Samuel 25. These two accounts help us measure the development in David's character as he reacts to basically the same set of data. David matured and became more

⁹ Arnold, B. T. (2003). *1 & 2 Samuel* (p. 353). Zondervan.

¹⁰ Arnold, B. T. (2003). *1 & 2 Samuel* (pp. 353–354). Zondervan.

confident in his role as king-in-waiting. The distance between the two messianic figures continues to increase. As surely as David was certain to become Israel's king, Saul was just as certainly running to his own destruction.¹¹

- ⇒ **How does faithful living in times of difficulty develop the kind of character that pleases God?**
- ⇒ **Discuss this quote: David negotiated his way through the gritty details without always being aware of God's participation. So, it is with all believers. We walk through life with the conviction that God loves us and is involved in the details of our lives. But only on rare and wonderful occasions do we actually become conscious of God's abiding hand.¹²**
- ⇒ **Can you describe one of these "rare and wonderful occasions" from your own life?**

2. Pray: Praise God that He is sovereign and providential, always in control. Thank Him for the multitude of ways He has demonstrated this to you. Ask Him to give you confidence and trust in His will, His way, and His timing.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Holman New Testament Commentary, 1 and 2 Samuel*, pages 170-178.
- *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pages 8, 767-770.
- *The NIV Application Commentary, 1 and 2 Samuel* pages 349-357.
- *Shepherd's Notes, 1 and 2 Samuel*, pages 44-45.

¹¹ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 354). Zondervan.

¹² Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 355). Zondervan.