

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

NOVEMBER 25 2023

running

Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 18–27.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 64 and 65.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This week's lesson explores the complicated relationship between two of God's anointed leaders, Saul and David. David's conquest of Goliath and the subsequent routing of the Philistines by the Israelites made David quite popular among the Israelites. But, to be sure, not everyone can enjoy and appreciate the successes of others. This seemed to be one of Saul's chief failings.

Ironically, it was David's loyalty and ability to get the job done—no matter what the mission given him by Saul—that led Saul to promote him (1 Samuel 18:5). His service to King Saul was so exemplary that the people serenaded him with song: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands" (verse 7, NIV).

Inspired by Satan, Saul concluded that David desired his throne, and from that moment on Saul looked for opportunities to kill David. Were it not for the intervention of God, Saul's javelin would have killed David (verse 11). Ironically enough, his efforts were undermined from within his own house. Saul's son, Jonathan, developed a covenant of friendship with David that was stronger than his familial ties, and he protected David.

In the succeeding chapters we have a front-row seat to Saul's personal destruction. His jealous hatred of David was so unquenchable that when he found out Ahimelech the priest had housed the fleeing David, he ordered the killing of Ahimelech, his household, and 84 other priests at Nob. The favor of God at work in the life of David seemed to bring out the worst in Saul.

In spite of Saul's jealous rage, David refused to harm him for he was still God's anointed, and David would not allow feelings of revenge to cloud his respect for God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that pride, and its twin, jealousy, are precursors to destruction. *(Know)*
- Become aware of the peace that comes from obedience to the will of God. *(Feel)*
- Seize opportunities to trust God in the most difficult challenges of life, instead of following their own inclinations. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Law of God, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 19: "The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. (Exod. 20:1-17; Deut. 28:1-14; . . . 1 John 2:3; 5:3; Rev. 12:17; 14:12.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it,*

discuss their responses.

Invite the students to make a list of things people get really jealous about. Then ask: What motivates people to become jealous of others?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Jan's parents brought her up in a Christian home, but she rebelled against their values. Believing them manipulative and controlling, she set out to explore the world on her own. By age 15 she had slipped into alcohol and drug abuse. These became addictions that she could never quite shake.

Sometimes Jan would visit the church of her childhood. She attended evangelistic meeting where she showed interest, but she could never quite grasp the real power and presence of God. She would come forward after an appeal—determined to stop using drugs, but each time she went back to her old life.

Life just kept spiraling downward for Jan—one problem led to another—until her life was completely out of control.

Why couldn't Jan find a way out of her problems? Could some basic lifestyle decisions have made a major change in her life?

God's grace is greater than habit or problem that binds us. God's grace and power is greater than any adversaries we might face. Here is how you can personally receive His grace and power:

1. Acknowledge that you are weak and incapable of battling the enemy on your own (see John 15:5).

2. By faith, believe that God's power is sufficient to deliver you (see Philippines 4:13).

3. Cut off all pathways of sin. Resist the devil (see James 4:7).—Adapted from Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, pp. 95, 96.

Failure comes when people do not, by God's power, separate themselves from evil and temptation. Saul instead of turning to God, continued relying on himself. He allowed evil thoughts, jealousy, and disobedience to rule his life. With each step Saul drew further away from God and His plan for his life. The decisions Saul made throughout his life led him in the end to turn completely away from God.

The decisions we make day to day either build character or destroy it. David allowed God to lead in his life and because of this he was able to respect Saul as God's anointed and not harm him when it was in his power to do so.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Sometimes our actions can have a profound effect on others. In our lesson for this week Saul's envy of David pushes his bravest and brightest military tactician into a life on the run filled with trials, hardships, and stress.

Because indulged sin tends to grow worse, Saul's descent into self-destruction gains considerable momentum with each effort to kill David. He plows through warning after warning, blinded by his own pride and jealousy. Not once but twice, David spared his life, and the sheer magnanimity of the act cuts him to the heart; but a few hours later he is undeterred. Saul's rejection of God's restraints leaves him in a free fall, and his only path forward is down.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- *Underline* the verses in which significant shifts occur in the story.
- Is there anything particularly startling about the relationships among the main actors in the drama? Identify one motivation behind each of their actions.
- Are there places in the story in which the Spirit of God can be seen, or His presence felt? *Draw* a star by those spots.
- If this passage of Scripture was all that we knew of these characters, what might we conclude about the way each of them lived their lives?
- *Circle* the "minor" players in the narrative. Who are they, and how do they affect the thinking of the main character?
- There are gender issues at play in this story. How do the women and men relate in this episode, and what are the effects of their interaction?
- What lessons are there to be learned from this biblical episode?
- Who in the narrative most exemplifies the character and spirit of Jesus?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: John 15:1-17; Romans 8:18-27; 1 Samuel 20:1-4.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. **Compare and Contrast.** While reading the story of Saul's fall from grace and David's rise to the throne, it is helpful to consider the differences in their responses to difficulties right from the beginning. Saul, king and commander in chief of Israel's defense forces, endures the daily insults of Israel and their God by Goliath. David, on the other hand, is offended and motivated to vindicate God's name and character. Saul is offended by the praise heaped on David; David is humbled by it. When Saul offers David the hand of his eldest daughter, Merab, in marriage, he responds: "Who am I . . . that I should become the king's son-in-law?" (1 Samuel 18:18, NIV). Saul, in fact, was planning to have the Philistines murder David (verse 17) in battle.

   Saul grew more and more fearful of David with each missed assassination. Why? "Because the LORD was with David but had departed from Saul" (1 Samuel 18:12, NIV). When God does not guide the life, our decisions become an exercise in force rather than faith.
2. **The Friendship.** Few biblical friendships carry the depth of emotion as the friendship between Jonathan and David. Many writers tend to focus on David's vulnerability in this story, but consider Jonathan's circumstance for a moment. Jonathan was a prince, an heir to the throne of Israel, and was no weak warrior. With his armor-bearer alone he once slew 20 Philistines on a half-acre plot of land in close combat. He, too, heard the people chanting David's name after he killed Goliath and led successful military campaigns for his father. He saw how the women of the city fawned over David. Jonathan could have easily formed an alliance with his father and killed David, but he chose not to. This choice meant that he would probably never see the throne of his father, Saul. He knew that David would be king, possibly taking his place, yet he was undeterred in his love for David. Jonathan was one of the most selfless persons in all of Scripture.
3. **Far From Perfect.** During his life as a fugitive, David made some bad decisions under major duress—one being when he traveled to Nob to see Ahimelech, the high priest (1 Samuel 21). "He [Ahimelech] inquired what had brought him there. The young man was in constant fear of discovery, and in his extremity he resorted to deception. David told the priest he had been sent by the king on a secret errand, one that required the utmost expedition. Here he manifested a want of faith in God, and his sin resulted in causing the death of the high priest. Had the facts been plainly stated, Ahimelech would have known what course to pursue to preserve his life. God requires that truthfulness

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Patriarchs and Prophets. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

shall mark His people, even in the greatest peril" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 655). Not only did Ahimelech die, but just about all other members of his family and 84 other priests.

4. **A Quiet Death.** The death of Samuel is mentioned briefly in 1 Samuel 25:1. The chapter does not elucidate the ceremony that ensued. It states only that the people "assembled and mourned for him" (NIV), then they buried him at his home in Ramah. In the death of Samuel perhaps there was an opportunity for Saul to reflect. This was the man who had anointed him king, who pointed out his faults and warned him to obey God. Of course, this was also the man who told him that God had taken the kingdom from him because of disobedience. The kingdom was lost, but Saul needn't lose his eternal life.

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Word Association

One of the great opportunities you can use to widen the learning of this week's lesson is to play a word association game with your students. Here's how it might work: Place the name of Saul on a chalkboard. Ask the students to shout out words that come to mind when they think of the Old Testament Saul. Write their answers on the board around Saul's name. Ask the students to do the same with David and Jonathan. This exercise is a great way to gauge the level of knowledge your students have about a given Bible character, thereby allowing you to focus more on information that will be new or previously unconsidered by them.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Give each student an index card and a pencil. Make the statement that Saul's pursuit of David is very similar to Satan's pursuit of us. He is constantly looking for ways to harm us physically and spiritually. Ask the students to make two lists. The first is a list of the snares that Satan tries to use to trip us up. The second list should consist of the safeguards that God has given us to help us avoid imminent destruction.

After the students have finished, ask them to share some of their answers. Ask a volunteer to pray, thanking God for His protection each day.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

To the average onlooker, the stories in God's Word often seem like . . . well . . . just stories. But they were real people whose life consequences have been playing out for centuries.

Saul's unwillingness to obey all that God commanded him inevitably led to his losing the throne of Israel, and to his oppression of Israel. Unrestrained pride, arrogance, and jealousy led him to persecute a young man who brought him nothing but accolades.

In spite of Saul's behavior—the ugly example of leadership he set—David remained his servant, refusing twice to take his life when the chance presented itself. For his refusal to choose the path of revenge, David was driven from his home, chased into the camp of Israel's sworn enemies, enduring long nights in the wilderness. There were moments when his faith in God faltered, but David would take his failures to God. It was this practice that differentiated him from Saul.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 64 and 65.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 18–27.
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running



Photo by Jennifer and Company

keytext

"May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you."

(1 Samuel 24:12, NIV)

flashlight

"Though Saul was ever on the alert for an opportunity to destroy David, he stood in fear of him, since it was evident that the Lord was with him. David's blameless character aroused the wrath of the king; he deemed that the very life and presence of David cast a reproach upon him, since by contrast it presented his own character to disadvantage. It was envy that made Saul miserable and put the humble subject of his throne in jeopardy. What untold mischief has this evil trait of character worked in our world!" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 651).

what do you think?

Complete the following statement in your own words:
I dislike people who are jealous because

_____
_____
_____

What are some qualities about themselves that jealous people overlook when envying others?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

did you know?

Saul opened his heart to the spirit of jealousy by which his soul was poisoned. . . . The monarch of Israel was opposing his will to the will of the Infinite One. Saul had not learned . . . that he should rule his own spirit. He allowed his impulses to control his judgment, until he was plunged into a fury of passion . . . ready to take the life of any who dared oppose his will."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 650.

INTO THE STORY

"After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

"Whatever mission Saul sent him on, David was so successful that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the troops, and Saul's officers as well.

"When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres. As they danced, they sang: 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.'

"Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. 'They have credited David with tens of thousands,' he thought, 'but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?' And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David.

"The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully on Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand and he hurled it, saying to himself, 'I'll pin David to the wall.' But David eluded him twice.

"Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had departed from Saul. So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. In everything he did he had great success, because the LORD was with him. When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns."

(1 Samuel 18:1-16, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main players or characters in this biblical narrative? *Circle* their names.

What is the relationship between them? Are they family members, friends, or acquaintances?

_____
_____
_____

What events have brought these people to the place where their lives intersect?

_____
_____
_____

Underline the Scriptures in which you see a significant shift in the story.

Do you see God in this passage? Where is He mentioned?

_____
_____
_____

Whom do you admire most in the passage? Why?

_____
_____
_____

How can you emulate that person in the way you live today? This week?

_____
_____
_____

What are two lessons that you think God wants you to take from this biblical episode?

_____
_____
_____

If you could share one point from this story with a friend, which would it be? *Mark* that place in the story with a star.

punch lines

"It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" **(John 13:1, NIV).**

"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it" **(Matthew 16:25, NIV).**

"Pride brings a person low, but the lowly in spirit gain honor" **(Proverbs 29:23, NIV).**

"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you" **(Romans 12:3, NIV).**

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" **(Matthew 11:29, NIV).**

"The Lord replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest' " **(Exodus 33:14, NIV).**

further insight

"When by the jealousy of Saul driven a fugitive into the wilderness, David, cut off from human support, leaned more heavily upon God. . . . Through years of waiting and peril, David learned to find in God his comfort, his support, his life."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 152.

Sabbath

Read 1 Samuel 18:8.

Long before Shakespeare (check out the *Did You Know?* section), Israel's first king, Saul, was giving new meaning to the word "jealousy."

Refer to your answers for the *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson. What was it that got Saul so angry at David?

_____

_____

_____

Did David do anything to warrant Saul's response? What blessing or blessings did Saul overlook in his jealous rage at David?

_____

_____

_____

Sunday

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-16.

The *Into the Story* biblical narrative for this week's lesson begins a dark chapter in the lives of David, Jonathan, and Saul. After reading 1 Samuel 18:1-16, complete the *Out of the Story* study questions.

Having completed the study questions, list two specific ways that Saul could or should have addressed his feelings of envy toward David.

1._____

_____

2._____

_____

Monday

Read 1 Samuel 19:1; 1 Samuel 20:1; 1 Samuel 21:1, 2; 1 Samuel 22:1; and 1 Samuel 23:7.

This week's *Key Text* captures a scene at the end of a long chase. By the time the story gets to 1 Samuel 24:12, our key text for this week, David has been on the run for some time, struggling to stay out of Saul's sight.

In his pursuit of David, Saul stopped to rest in the very cave where David and his men were hiding (1 Samuel 24). While Saul slept, David took a knife and cut off a piece of the king's robe, proof that he could have killed him if he had wanted to do so.

What reason does David give for refusing to hurt Saul? (1 Samuel 24:10).

_____

_____

_____

How can that reason help us in our disagreements with fellow believers?

_____

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read Proverbs 29:23.

Read this week's *Flashlight* quotation. Did any part of the quotation stand out to you? Notice the first part of the second sentence: "David's blameless character aroused the wrath of the king."

What was it about David's life and character that made Saul's character seem so bad? Do you think the slaying of Goliath by David exposed flaws in Saul's character? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* for this week. Choose the scripture that really speaks to you, then complete the following statements:

This scripture is meaningful to me because

_____

_____

_____

_____

If I follow the lesson taught in this scripture, it will help me deal with _____

_____

_____

_____

Thursday

Read Matthew 11:29.

This week you studied about Saul's all-consuming jealousy of David's success in military endeavors, popularity with the subjects of his kingdom, and the favor of God that seemed to rest on David's life.

Have you ever been jealous of a family member or friend? How did you deal with your feelings? Did you tell the person of whom you were jealous how you felt about them? Did you tell God?

_____

_____

_____

Friday

Read Exodus 33:14.

One of the most beautiful themes in this week's lesson is the friendship that developed between Jonathan, Saul's son, and David. Jonathan risked his life to save David from his father's wrath. How is what Jonathan did for David similar to what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross?

_____

_____

_____

We may not all be asked to risk our lives for a friend. However, the depth of love that Jonathan felt for David is a beautiful example of godly friendship. How can you develop this type of godly friendship in your life?

_____

_____

_____

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 64 and 65.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.