

The Life of David: Finding God Through the Loneliness of Life and Job Loss

I Samuel 21:1-15/Psalm 52

As we open to I Samuel 16 think with me what David must have felt: So much has happened so fast. First, "King for a day" in chapter 16 we met a young shepherd boy, minding his sheep when the greatest man in Israel comes and sits in his dad's house waiting to meet him. There in front of his family, David is anointed the next King of Israel. Back to the sheep he goes, and off to the war go his brothers.

Then "Super Warrior" as we turn to I Samuel 17, and enter one of the greatest chapters of the Bible. Most people have heard of this event. David facing, fearlessly confronting, and miraculously defeating the biggest, strongest, and most feared warrior of the day is astonishing, and so encouraging. The lessons flow from this chapter.

Then, David becomes almost overnight, in I Samuel 18-20, a "National Hero". In a short period of time he becomes a member of King Saul's cabinet as a commander of the army. Plus he gets to marry into the Royal Family, while still keeping his job as the most visible musician of the day. Add to that the rage and death threats of a dark hearted Saul, and the picture becomes cloudy. David sticks it out, faces abuse: both verbal, emotional, and physical. Then the moment of truth comes. Jonathan warns him that his worst nightmare is true. The King of Israel wants to use the entire resource of the nation to hunt, track down, and to kill his own son-in-law, David.

David is an unemployed young man, facing a bleak and unknown future with nowhere to go, and on the run. That is where I Samuel 20 ends.

DAVID'S SHOCK AT HIS JOB LOSS

If you've ever had to face sudden unemployment, you should be able to identify with how David felt as he was going through this very trying time.

David was always a hard worker.

Because he had been continuously employed since his earliest youth, David never had time to think about unemployment. Either he was tending the sheep or acting

as a courier to run provisions to his brothers at the front lines. After defeating Goliath, King Saul hired him to work in various departments of the government. Although David got to sit at Saul's table as his son-in-law, he had to earn his wife, Michal, by meeting a quota of killing 100 Philistines. However, as an "eager beaver" employee he went "the second mile" and killed 200.

Life sometimes throws us a curve.

David lived by King Saul: he worked for him, ate with him, sang and played the harp for him, and married his daughter. All of his financial and family security was wrapped up in that job. Then suddenly everything drastically changed. Isn't that always what happens? Everything's just rolling along, we're up to our neck with an unbelievable workload, and then BOOM!—out of the blue we get notice our services are no longer needed. When Saul threw a spear at David to kill him,¹ that was the equivalent of today's "pink slip." (Getting fired was more direct and blunt 3,000 years ago.) Given that David had never felt the sting of a job loss, he was hard hit by the unexpected unemployment.

David's job loss was a big surprise to everyone but God.

As David mulled over what had happened, he felt the immense pain of loneliness that usually accompanies the unanticipated loss of everything formerly relied upon. But God was in control, and had allowed that unemployment for a refining purpose. So everything changed for David except what was most important—his growing relationship with God.

Here's a key point: habits you're forming now will determine your response to God when you're caught off guard by a new heartache. If you've made a habit of turning to God in all circumstances, it will be natural to flee to Christ as your Refuge the moment trouble strikes. Should you lose your job, or face a different trauma, remember this: everything will change except for one thing—God, and His great love for you!

David reverted to his "default system."

If you work with computers, you know that occasionally a malfunction causes a changed setting to revert back to its default, or original setting. When his unemployment malfunction occurred, David reverted back to his original settings, and that is reflected in the setting in I Samuel 21, a time David sang about:

When Life Hurts

As we open to I Samuel 21, we are opening to a man on the run, out of work, and literally not even sure where his next meal will come from. We could say that David is in the midst of great family troubles, he is separated from his wife, he has lost his job, bid

¹ 1 Samuel 20:33

farewell to his best friend, and knows that there is a warrant out for his arrest with a shoot-to-kill all points bulletin against him for a crime he never came close to committing.

I Samuel 21:1-15 Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech was afraid when he met David, and said to him, "Why are you alone, and no one is with you?" 2 So David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has ordered me on some business, and said to me, 'Do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you, or what I have commanded you.' And I have directed my young men to such and such a place. 3 Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give me five loaves of bread in my hand, or whatever can be found." 4 And the priest answered David and said, "There is no common bread on hand; but there is holy bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves from women." 5 Then David answered the priest, and said to him, "Truly, women have been kept from us about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in effect common, even though it was consecrated in the vessel this day." 6 So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread in its place on the day when it was taken away. 7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD. And his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chief of the herdsmen who belonged to Saul. 8 And David said to Ahimelech, "Is there not here on hand a spear or a sword? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste." 9 So the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, there it is, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it. For there is no other except that one here." And David said, "There is none like it; give it to me." 10 Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. 11 And the servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another in dances, saying: 'Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands?'" 12 Now David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. 13 So he changed his behavior before them, pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard. 14 Then Achish said to his servants, "Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? 15 Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"

This chapter opens with David following:

The Habits of His Youth

Habits are what we cultivate to such a point they become automatic in our lives. It was automatic for David to seek the Lord. So where does he head in his darkest hour but to the place that God was most associated with, the Tabernacle where the Glorious

Presence of the Lord dwelt.

But, when David arrived in Nob, Ahimelech was afraid of him and wanted to know what he was doing there. Probably fearing that the priest would tell Saul about his visit, David is less than forthright by claiming to be on a secret mission for the king. He then requested bread to eat, but nothing was available except consecrated bread, which is what the priest gave him. Having fled so quickly, David also needed a weapon and thus asked for any sword or spear on hand. Look at verse 9 to see what was in Nob!

*So the priest said, "The **sword of Goliath** the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, there it is, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it. For there is no other except that one here." And David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."*

The sword of Goliath, won by David in I Samuel 17 is stored here in God's tent. How did Goliath's sword get into the tent of God in the first place? Way back in Psalms 8, 19, and 23, we saw how David had decided that in everything he would seek to please God.

He never compartmentalized his life by including the Lord in some areas, but not in others. And that was true when he slew Goliath and got to keep the giant's sword—a very special trophy. The Philistines, experts in iron, had made a one-of-a-kind sword for their most seasoned and honored warrior! But the special lesson here is all about:

Treasure Keeping

So then, how did the sword get into the tent of God? David told the Lord, "You are my King. You lead me in victory. I didn't defeat Goliath—You did. I don't deserve the credit for this—You do. This sword is like no other; I'm leaving my greatest treasure with You, here in Nob, in Your tent God, because I want to please You with my life."

How can you go wrong with an attitude like that? One fascinating insight is revealed in this moment. It was a trait that marked David for life. At the end of his life we find this same trait is still evident. In I Samuel 21:9 we see that David was in the habit of entrusting all his treasures into the Lord's Hands.

What did David do with the greatest trophy of the world of his day? David had won in open battle the spoils of Goliath. The sword of Goliath was the ultimate trophy. And what did David do with that treasured trophy? The same thing he did with all of his other treasures: David gave back to the Lord all of his treasures and trophies.

A simple chorus that was used during the offerings taken for the Lord in days past goes like this. Note the visual reminder these words paint of why we give, starting with every possession figuratively held in my hands:

All I have belongs to you;
For all I have has come from you.

Nothing I own, nothing I possess,
Is by my own hands, its by Your Faithfulness.
So please take this offering,
From a heart of Thanksgiving,
For You've given all I have.

Treasures of time and resources, given to God, will last forever.

Treasures offered back to the One who gave them, brings great glory and honor to Him. David models for all of us the great opportunity we have to invest what we cannot keep, to gain what we'll never lose.

This Nob story is one of the greatest lessons in the Bible about how we should live our lives. Everyone who's been to the Holy Land on one of my tours has heard it. As a group we go to the top of the Mount of Olives to look off in the distance at the ruins of Nob, just outside of Jerusalem. As we read what happened in 1 Samuel 21:1-9, I remind them that God also wants us to give all our trophies to Him because He alone deserves the credit and the glory for anything we accomplish. With such a heart to serve, there is no limit to what the Lord can do with, and in, and through us.

What happened after David got Goliath's sword from the priest? Because Doeg, King Saul's chief shepherd, had overheard David's conversation with Ahimelech and would certainly report that information to King Saul, David was forced to stay on the run. But, in spite of all the hardships David faced:

God was Working All Things for Good

The Lord saw the big picture of His divine purpose in all that was happening, and He inspired in David to breathe-out (by the Holy Spirit) his testimony of what the Lord accomplished through this hard time—how to overcome feelings of despair when you're unexpectedly out of work, life has turned upside down, and all familiar routines and work patterns are gone.

David fled to God in his distress, gets a meal, grabs his old sword he left there long ago, and moves out into the darkness of his flight from danger. As we turn to **Psalm 52**, we are entering some the darkest hours yet in David's life. David writes this meditation to share these four lessons he learned in hard times:

- v. 1 God is good no matter what!
- v. 2-4 People will always hurt us.
- v. 5-7 Take God as your strength, in times like this.
- v. 8-9 Wait for God, cling to Him, and grow through the alone times!

Look for those truths now as we read this amazing Psalm 52. First remember the first words in the Hebrew manuscript that God gave us by inspiration, are these words about Doeg that form the inspired backdrop for the words of this 52nd Psalm.

Psalm 52

To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of David when Doeg the Edomite went and told Saul, and said to him, "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech."

- 1 Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man?
The goodness of God endures continually.
- 2 Your tongue devises destruction,
Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
- 3 You love evil more than good,
Lying rather than speaking righteousness. Selah
- 4 You love all devouring words,
You deceitful tongue.
- 5 God shall likewise destroy you forever;
He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place,
And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah
- 6 The righteous also shall see and fear,
And shall laugh at him, saying,
- 7 "Here is the man who did not make God his strength,
But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
And strengthened himself in his wickedness.
- 8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God;
I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.
- 9 I will praise You forever, Because You have done it; And in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good.

Now, walk through each word of this Psalm and see the wonderful lessons God has for us.

God is Good

Psalm 52:1—*Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God endures continually.*

We don't know the details of the conversation with Doeg, but he was a weasel of a guy who was both an informant and a murderer. In fact, at King Saul's enraged command, Doeg later slew the eighty-five priests from Nob because they knew David's whereabouts and did not tell the king (1 Samuel 22:18).²

It's uncertain whether Doeg is the only one David was talking about in Psalm 52, but the most important point of the whole psalm is at the end of verse 1: *The goodness of God endures continually.* David was saying, "God's goodness endures through my job loss, my insecurities, my loss of comfort, and my loss of time with

² In 1 Samuel 22:19, all the inhabitants and livestock at Nob were also slain. Only Abiathar, a son of Ahimelech, escaped and he joined David's flight from Saul.

my family. Regardless of what is happening in my life, God is good!”

Psalm 52:2-4—*Your tongue devises destruction, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. You love evil more than good, lying rather than speaking righteousness. Selah³ You love all devouring words, you deceitful tongue.*

This is a fact of life: at one time or another people will hurt us. When we're feeling the most desperate, it should come as no surprise if someone comes along and says things like:

- “You’ve lost your job? Oh well, they probably never needed you anyway.”
- “Why don’t you just deal with it and look in the Help Wanted ads?”
- “There must be a reason why you’ve been out of work so long. What’s wrong with you?”
- “I thought you were jobless. Why are you spending money in that way?”
- “What did you do to get fired?”

People can be mean and even take pleasure in hurting others. Whoever it was in verses 2-4 had a sharp razor-like tongue and was deceitfully devouring David. And David suffered through all that pain.

Psalm 52:5-7—*God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place, and uproot you from the land of the living. Selah The righteous also shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying “Here is the man who did not make God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.”*

These verses reflect some imprecation; imprecatory prayers are when judgment is prayed down on someone, so we must be very careful about that form of prayer. (For example, never say “God will destroy you” to friends who tease you when you’re out of work.)

The lesson David learned when unemployed and feeling insecure in verse 7, is a case where the Truth is learned by the reverse. In other words, if the wicked didn’t make God their strength, then David would. He thus said, “God is my strength. Trusting Him is how I’m making it through this lonely time. He is the reason I’m triumphing.” And God allows us trying times to see if our choices, actions, and words will declare His Goodness, all the time.

Psalm 52:8-9—*I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever. I will praise You forever, because You have done it; and in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good.*

David personalized his faith in verses 8-9: *I trust in the mercy of God; I will praise You forever.* How did he start the Psalm in verse 1? *The goodness of God endures forever.* He ends this Psalm pointing at God and saying, “I will wait on Your name,

³ Selah is a pause or emphasis and contemplation.

Good Shepherd, whom I've followed and trusted all my life, for Your name is good."

The bottom line is no matter what:

DAVID WAITED ON THE LORD

Look again at Psalm 52:9: *I will praise You forever, because You have done it; and in the presence of Your saints **I will wait** on Your name, for it is good.* The Hebrew word translated "wait" is *hupomeno*, which is actually the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word *qavah* (Strong's #6960—"hope that renews exhausted strength").⁴ To better grasp its meaning, look at the most well-known verse in the Bible which uses this special word. Turn with me to Isaiah 40:29-31.

*He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who **wait** on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:29-31).*

This Hebrew verb for "wait" means: "to twist and/or stretch." In the Old Testament world it was used of making rope by twisting and stretching many weak strands into a strong rope. In time, this concept of rope-making became a metaphor for waiting and receiving strength from God during weak times, so we can endure the twisting and stretching of our lonely, painful trials.

David was saying, "Lord, as You're twisting together all these unexpected events, I choose to cling to You, and wait for You, because You are good. And when You finish with all You want to accomplish in me through this trial, I'll be even stronger. Because I love You, I want to do what You want me to do, and respond how You want me to respond."

Practically speaking, if you lose your job, by all means do everything necessary to find another one. Check the classifieds or employment agencies, get re-trained or acquire extra education to beef up your skills if needed, or relocate if that's what it takes to get back on your feet.

But as you go out and "beat a path" to find a job, do so *confidently*, as David did in verse 9: "**I will wait** on Your name, for it is good."

If you trust God enough to take His help as He weaves His Word into your weaknesses, you will find, like the Apostle Paul, that God's grace is sufficient, and His strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

⁴ When the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek (the LXX), *hupomeno* (Strong's #5278 - "endure") was used as the equivalent for the Hebrew word *qavah* (Strong's #6960), translated as "wait" in both Psalm 52:9 and Isaiah 40:31.
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Trusting God with his job loss was what gave David the “waiting hope” to make him stronger to overcome the next wave of life’s unending, lonely struggles. In God’s hands, righteous responses when you’re feeling all alone will actually become a blessing as He twists and stretches you into the “waiting hope” that will draw you ever closer to Him!

Why not join me in affirming our hope in God who is Good by turning to Hymn # 354

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

What a fellowship, what a joy divine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Refrain

Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.

O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
O how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Refrain

What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Refrain