



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

I SAMUEL

Week 3

What Was That All About?

1 Samuel 15:1-35

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever tried to makes sense of a tragedy and asked “where was God?”

DIGGING
into the Word

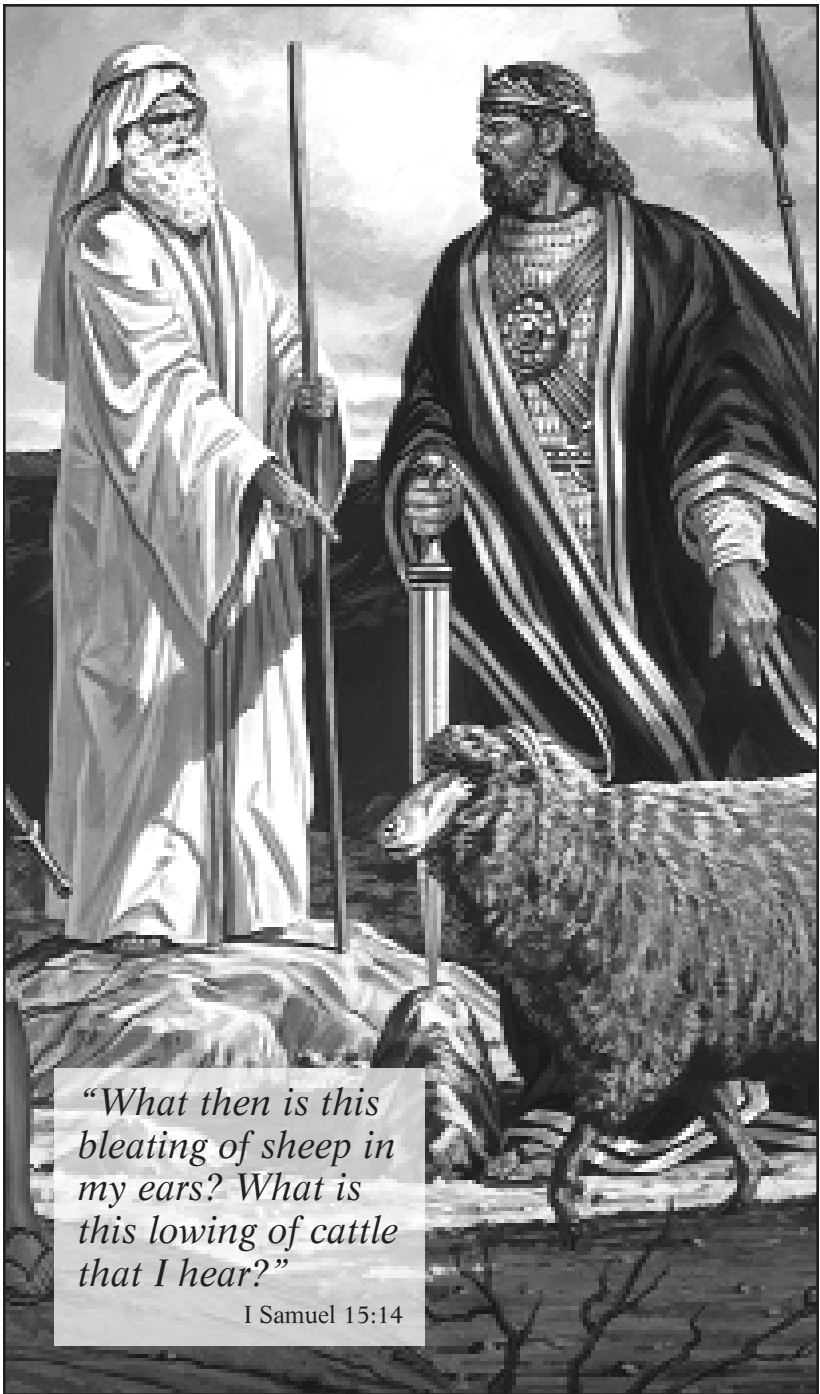
1. What was the second “test” God seems to have given Saul to perform (1Sa 15:1-6)?
2. How did Saul react (vs. 7-11)?
3. When Samuel corrected him, did Saul repent or did he seek to justify his actions (vs. 12-22)?
4. In verse 24, Saul seemed repentant at last. But what clue do you see in verse 30 that indicates his repentance was not genuine? Samuel loved Saul (vs. 35) but he knew the king’s character was not to be trusted and that he was dangerous.

LIVING
out the Word

When confronted with a deeply troubling report of a catastrophe we are well advised to center our attempts to understand in the life, teachings, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

WINDOW
on the Word

*The biblical command to **exterminate nations** such as the Amalekites again raises the issue of God’s love versus his justice. Given the clear, nonviolent teachings of Jesus, do you feel Samuel may have been speaking more from his own perspectives than those of God when he told Saul that God commanded this complete annihilation of the Amalekites? Or is it possible that Old Testament authors and later editors put words into God’s mouth as they record this act of revenge? This event is troubling (it should be!) and leads us to deeply consider who and what God is and isn’t.*



*“What then is this
bleating of sheep in
my ears? What is
this lowing of cattle
that I hear?”*

I Samuel 15:14



Artwork by Mike Wimmer

A Man Called David

DAY 16

1 Samuel 16:1-23

Did you have any heroes while you were growing up? What about today?

1. From this point on, the theme of 1 Samuel becomes the conflict between Saul and David as Samuel slowly fades from the scene (vs. 1-6). It was vital that all Israel see clearly Saul's lack of fitness for office and David's opposite qualities. What did God value when he chose David as Israel's new king (vs. 7)?

2. "The Spirit of the Lord" that came upon David (v. 13) was also given to the earlier, more humble Saul (1Sa 10:6-10). Did God's Spirit stay with Saul (v. 14)? Do you think this had anything to do with Saul's drastically changed attitude?

The text indicates that music was an important influence in the lives of both Saul and David. Is it important in your life? What kind of music do you prefer? What about your friends?

*The "evil spirit from the Lord" brings up the subject of **demonic influences**. Saul's moodiness and violent outbursts may have made him susceptible to such influences. Both Old and New Testaments show there is an evil spirit world. But, it is unwise to attribute all mental, emotional or psychological disorders to the spirit world. Many times there are chemical and biological imbalances or inherited conditions that cause erratic and unpredictable behavior. While earlier epochs in human history tended to lump many dysfunctions into the category of demonic activity, today we understand many other sources of abnormal conduct. We also understand that "demons" can be a metaphor for unresolved shame and guilt that can be healed in and through Jesus. What made Saul vulnerable to evil influence was a murderous, hostile, hate-filled frame of mind. As we have seen, that attitude would have had him execute his son Jonathan over a trivial matter.*

OPENING

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The Bigger They Are, the Harder They Fall

1 Samuel 17:1-58

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you faced real fear? Think of one time in your life when you encountered your biggest fear. Did you prevail, or did you back down? Did you (or will you) face it again?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. It took a national emergency to bring David back to center stage. What was the nature of Goliath's challenge to the Israelites (vs. 1-11)?
2. How did David react to Goliath's challenge (vs. 26-27)? How did David's brothers react to David's reaction (vs. 28-29)?
3. David's reliance on God and gutsy determination to face the Philistine giant earns him a place as one of the heroes of faith (see Heb 11:32). How had David learned as a boy to accept God's gift of faith and trust in God (vs. 34-37)?
4. David was persuasive enough to convince Saul (vs. 32-39). What was his secret weapon (vs. 40)? In whose name did he fight (vs. 45-47)?

LIVING
out the Word

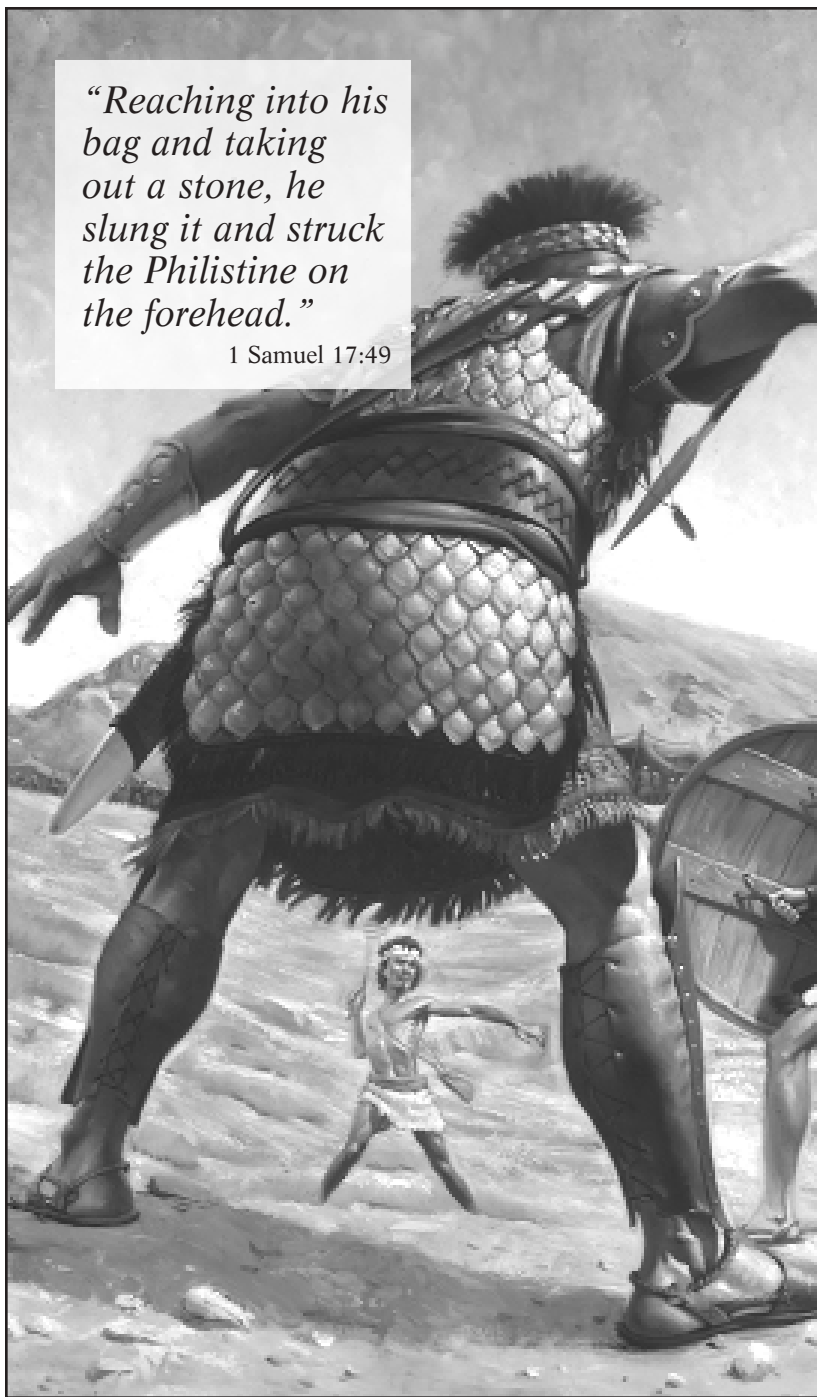
From now on David's story dominates the narrative. But he would soon learn that trust in God was not going to be an easy journey. Have you faced challenges and obstacles as you walk with Jesus?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The stand-off between Israel and the Philistines took place in the **Valley of Elah**, which led out into the coastal plain. Elah was in the Shephelah, the rugged hill country of Judah, some 14 miles from Bethlehem. David had to travel a full day to help his brothers (vs. 12-25). The **five stones** David took from the stream to use against Goliath were each probably bigger than a baseball. In those days, a skilled sling-thrower could hurl them at nearly 100 miles per hour. Taking a cubit as 17.5 inches, Goliath would be about nine feet tall. For the demoralized soldiers of Saul's army, Goliath was too big to tangle with; for David, he was too big to miss.*

“Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead.”

1 Samuel 17:49



All's Fair in Politics and War?

1 Samuel 18:1-30

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you or anyone you know been a victim of office politics—or were you an office “politician”? What was the outcome?

DIGGING
into the Word

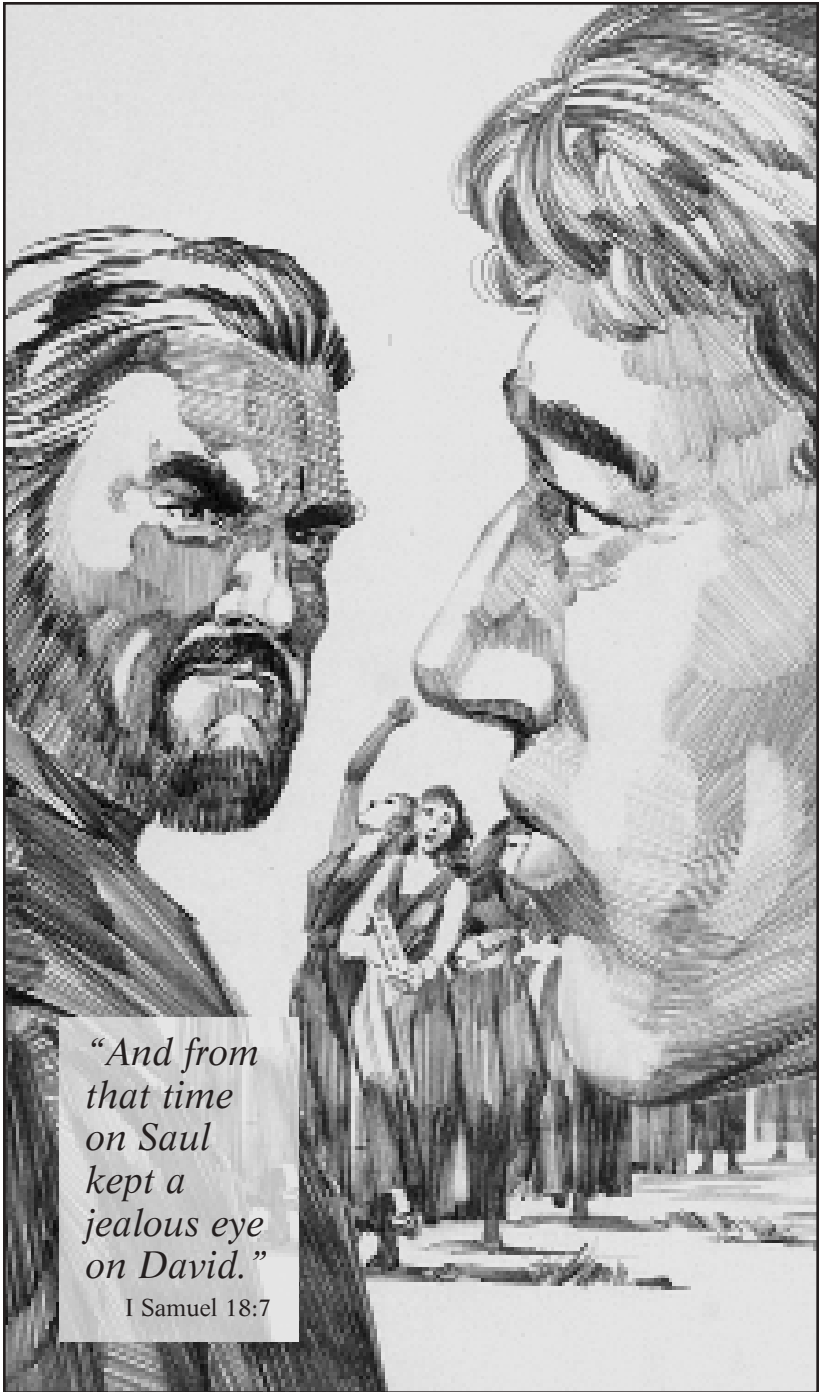
1. David's relationship with Saul soon deteriorated because of jealousy. What episode provoked Saul's rage (vs. 5-12)?
2. David's reputation expanded over the countryside (vs. 13-16). What exploit did Saul demand of David in an effort to discredit him (vs. 17-25)?
3. Did the result change Saul's attitude (vs. 28-29)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have you ever had a serious falling out with a friend or associate who had formerly helped you in your career or your life? Has Jesus given you the ability to reconcile?
2. Although David was never Saul's enemy, Saul made himself David's enemy. While Christians should make every effort to be peacemakers, the biblical injunction adds a wise qualification: “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Ro 12:18). Sometimes it just isn't possible. Saul was physically dangerous (vs. 10-11), but David did not have to tolerate that forever. Have you ever had to distance yourself from certain people—even other Christians?

WINDOW
on the Word

*We again see the use of **music**. David played the harp to soothe Saul's troubled spirit. We have already seen that Saul was easily affected by music (16:14-23). Apparently there were guilds of prophetic singers attached to the various sacred spots around Israel—Shiloh, Ramah, Gibeah (10:5). This helps us understand why the phrase “to prophesy” has multiple meanings in Scripture. It can refer to the formal speeches of chosen prophets, it can refer to groups of musicians moving in procession as those Saul met outside Gibeah or it can mean a formal choir of the kind we see Saul responding to in the next chapter.*

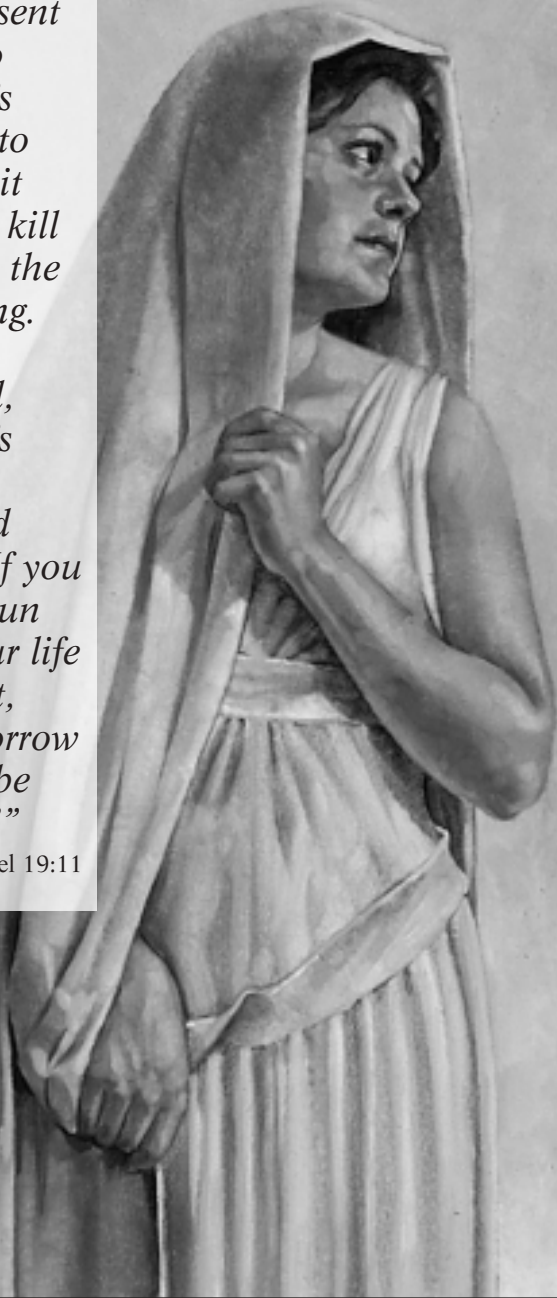


*“And from
that time
on Saul
kept a
jealous eye
on David.”*

I Samuel 18:7

“Saul sent men to David’s house to watch it and to kill him in the morning. But Michal, David’s wife, warned him, ‘If you don’t run for your life tonight, tomorrow you’ll be killed.’”

1 Samuel 19:11



The Better Part of Valor

DAY 19

1 Samuel 19:1-24

Have you ever been in a situation, a personality conflict or an argument where it was necessary to withdraw from the scene?

1. With this section of 1 Samuel it is possible to chart a series of cross-references to other parts of the Bible—especially the book of Psalms. Most of the first 72 psalms are attributed to David (Ps 72:20). Many of them speak of the kind of intense danger that David faced from Saul. Psalm 59 seems to specifically refer to the events in this chapter.

2. As the plot thickened around David at Saul's court, who came to his aid (vs. 1-7)?

3. What did Saul attempt against David for the second time (vs. 8-9)?

4. How did David's wife, Michal (Saul's daughter), help him elude Saul's assassins (vs. 11-17)?

5. Consider the setting here in 1 Samuel 19 as the background for Psalm 59:3, "See how they lie in wait for me! Fierce men conspire against me for no offense or sin of mine, O Lord!"

1. It took courage and integrity for Jonathan to stay loyal to David. Can you remember a time when a friend stayed loyal to you at great cost? Can you remember when you did the same for someone else?

2. Consider how King Saul's conspiracy against David foreshadows the conspiracy of religious authorities against Jesus some 1,000 years later.

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Artwork by Ken Tunell

The Point of No Return

DAY 20

1 Samuel 20:1-42

Do you have a relative who is estranged from the rest of your family? Have you tried to reconcile with him or her?

1. This chapter reminds us that leaders are often under constant constraints. As a court figure David was expected to put in an appearance at Saul's table (vs. 1-11), complicating his need to make a break with Saul. Others were watching his reactions.

2. As prominent people, what happened between David and Jonathan would have repercussions for their descendants and the whole nation. What did they promise each other (vs. 12-17)?

3. The new moon festival was an important state occasion (vs. 18-25). Why did Saul at first think David was missing (v. 26)?

4. The wily Saul soon saw through David's and Jonathan's plan (vs. 30-31). What action did Saul take toward Jonathan that revealed the king's deteriorating mental and spiritual condition (vs. 32-33)?

1. This was the point of no return. Even Jonathan was not safe from Saul. David and Jonathan would seldom see each other again (vs. 41-42). Saul's actions alienated those around him and would eventually lead to his own destruction and that of his son. Has there been anyone in your life who seemed intent on alienating those who could help?

2. "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown." How does this chapter bear that out for both kings?

Oaths and covenants were important in ancient times. David and Jonathan had made a pact of friendship. Just as Abraham had given animals to Abimelech (Ge 21:27), so Jonathan had given David his robe and armor (18:1-4). This may have symbolized Jonathan's conviction that David would be the rightful king, an extraordinary gesture for the heir to the throne. This covenant between the two men is mentioned more than once (18:3; 20:16, 42; 23:18).

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DAY 21

Desperate Days

OPENING
up to the Word

1 Samuel 21:1-15

What do you consider one of the most desperate times in your life? Looking back, can you see God's power, grace and unconditional love at work during that time?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How quickly things change! David the hero was now forced to flee for his life. Because he had to leave in such a hurry, he ate the consecrated bread that was devoted to the altar (vs. 1-6). David stretched the truth about the reason for his visit (v. 2). A thousand years later Jesus raised the issue of the consecrated bread suggesting that human life matters more than a religious ritual (Mt 12:3-8).

2. Did someone spot David trying to escape (vs. 7)? What was his position?

3. Life is strange with its twists and turns. What was ironic about the only weapon David could find (vs. 8-9)?

4. David's hasty visit to Nob resulted in the death of devout men (22:18). What rare trait did David exhibit regarding his activities (22:22)?

LIVING
out the Word

David later regretted his rash actions. Have you lived to regret things you have done earlier in life? Remember that God has already forgiven you through the completed work of Jesus. Isn't it time to accept his forgiveness and move on, with Jesus living his resurrected life in you?

WINDOW
on the Word

***Nob** was a major sanctuary. After the Philistine defeat at Shiloh, the Tabernacle may have moved to Nob. Nob was probably on the eastern slopes of Mt. Scopus, in the region of Jerusalem, the city later known as the City of David.*