



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

# BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

**I SAMUEL**

Week 4



# A Senseless Atrocity

DAY 22

1 Samuel 22:1-23

Have you (or someone you know) had to take responsibility for a serious situation? Is it possible you were the *cause* of the situation?

**1.** David arranged for his relatives to stay as exiles in Moab (vs. 3-4). What Moabite woman played an important role in David's ancestry (Ru 1:4; 4:13-22)?

**2.** David became the leader of an "outlaw" band. Did he have access to servants of God (v. 5)?

**3.** The next scene is all too familiar in our world of violence. The enraged and frustrated Saul ordered his henchman Doeg to kill 85 servants of the Lord (vs. 17-19). What was David's reaction to this slaughter (vs. 22-23)? Is this reaction consistent with his behavior at other times in his life?

**4.** How does Saul's slaughter of the priests (vs. 17-19) link back to the earlier part of this book (1Sa 2:31-36)?

**1.** Saul's foolish strike against Nob drove the priests to support David. Have you seen God take something tragic and bring some good out of it?

**2.** Loyalty is a two-sided coin. It can be a virtue—or it can be a fault if it is misplaced. In what ways does this chapter show David receiving and exemplifying true friendship and the positive side of loyalty (v. 23)?

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## The Outlaw King

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1 Samuel 23:1-29

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Have you or someone you know had to exercise great patience before gaining a reward, inheritance or payment for a completed job?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. What were David's concerns while he was exiled in the wilderness (vs. 1-6)?
2. David was being pushed deeper and deeper into more forbidding terrain. How is this period in David's life reflected in the Psalms (see Ps 63)?
3. David rescued the city of Keilah from the Philistines. Would the town have turned David over to Saul anyway (vs. 11-12)?
4. David had loyal friends. Who showed up at this crucial time to encourage him (vs. 15-18)?
5. Who were the Ziphites (vs. 19-23)? What did they do (vs. 24-25)? How did God rescue David in this situation (vs. 26-29)?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

This chapter is a reminder of how rare true friendship is. Life is a sifting experience. The people of Keilah liked David but would yield under pressure. Jonathan was loyal to the end. The Ziphites were deceitful (Psalm 54). Do you know who your true friends are? Has your friendship been tested?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*David inquired of God through the **ephod** that Abiathar the priest apparently wore (vs. 4-6). The ephod was a sleeveless, vest-like garment worn by the high priest with a breastplate attachment featuring the Urim and Thummim (Ex 28:6; 30). The Urim and Thummim were used to determine God's will. The text implies that Saul had used them previously (1Sa 14:18-19), and refers to them again in 1 Samuel 28:6. After this, we read little about them, except for a replica made in the days of Ezra (Ezr 2:63).*

*Israel in the  
Time of Saul*



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Source: The Macmillan Bible Atlas

## “God Is My Stronghold!”

1 Samuel 24:1-22

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Does rugged, natural scenery inspire you to think of God’s creative, protective power? How?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. How do these dangerous days form the backdrop to many of David’s songs (see vs. 1-3; Ps 52; 57; 59)?
2. What very human series of events is detailed in verses 3-7? Why was David’s conscience bothering him? Even in ancient times, saving face was a big priority (for example, see 2Sa 10:4-5).
3. What was David’s valuation of himself (v. 14)? Whom did David trust to sort things out (v. 15)? En-Gedi (“spring of the kid”) was an oasis honeycombed with caves. As David hid out in this rocky area, do you think he thought of God as his true stronghold? How is God described in Psalm 18:1-3?
4. David refused to seek personal revenge. In spite of David’s striking display of mercy, Saul still needed assurances. What was Saul’s request (vs. 20-22)?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. Though Saul and David parted peacefully, David did not go back with Saul. Does the old adage “once bitten, twice shy” apply here?
2. David would not move against Saul. He chose to bear his affliction rather than lash out in revenge or hostility. David would be remembered as merciful even in New Testament times. What was a common title for Jesus (Mt 9:27; 15:22)?
3. Saul’s temporary remorse illustrates the difference between a temporary emotion and a true change of heart. How does the apostle Paul describe the difference in 2 Corinthians 7:8-12?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*Martin Luther, the German reformer, wrote some 1,500 songs and hymns. One of the most enduring, “A Mighty Fortress,” seems to have been inspired by Psalm 18 or Psalm 46.*

# Abigail's Wisdom

DAY 25

1 Samuel 25:1-44

When was the last time you were really upset about something? Were you able to face the situation or did you take it out on someone else?

**1.** 1 Samuel 25 is the mini-drama of David, Abigail and the surly ingrate Nabal. Why did David feel he had a right to Nabal's support (vs. 1-9)?

**2.** How did Nabal react (vs. 9-11)? What is the meaning of the Hebrew name *Nabal* (v. 25)?

**3.** David, the man of action, was offended at Nabal's arrogance (vs. 12-13). What were some of the wise and skilful tactics Abigail used to cool David's anger (vs. 14-31)?

**4.** For what specific virtue did David praise Abigail (v. 33)?

**5.** Once again, the ancient human desire to save face comes into play in David's evaluation of Nabal's death (v. 39). Nabal had insulted David in the presence of his junior officers. How did Abigail use the principle of saving face in dealing with David (vs. 23-25)?

**1.** Has anyone ever had to dissuade you from doing something impetuous and impulsive? What was the outcome? Do you believe Jesus guided your final decision?

**2.** One of the more well-quoted biblical proverbs is Proverbs 15:1, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Are there people you know who exemplify this proverb?

*Archaeologists and geographers have been able to make sense of the narrative of David's wanderings described in these chapters. The **Judean Desert** is riddled with caves and strongholds and sheer limestone precipices, ideal places for hideaways.*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word

## A Man After God's Own Heart

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1 Samuel 26:1-25

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Has anyone ever been greatly indebted to you in any way, or vice versa? How did you handle it?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. The Ziphites were at it again (v. 1). Note David's plea in Psalm 7:3-5, and also his prayer in Psalm 25 concerning his persistent enemies.
2. How is this account of David's meeting with Saul different from that in chapter 24?
3. Once again David is tempted to assassinate Saul and end his troubles. Does he yield to this impulse (vs. 8-11)?
4. Why did David take Saul's spear and canteen (vs. 11-16)?
5. Once again Saul professes repentance but David is wary (vs. 17-22). What was David's term of respect for the king (vs. 23-25)?

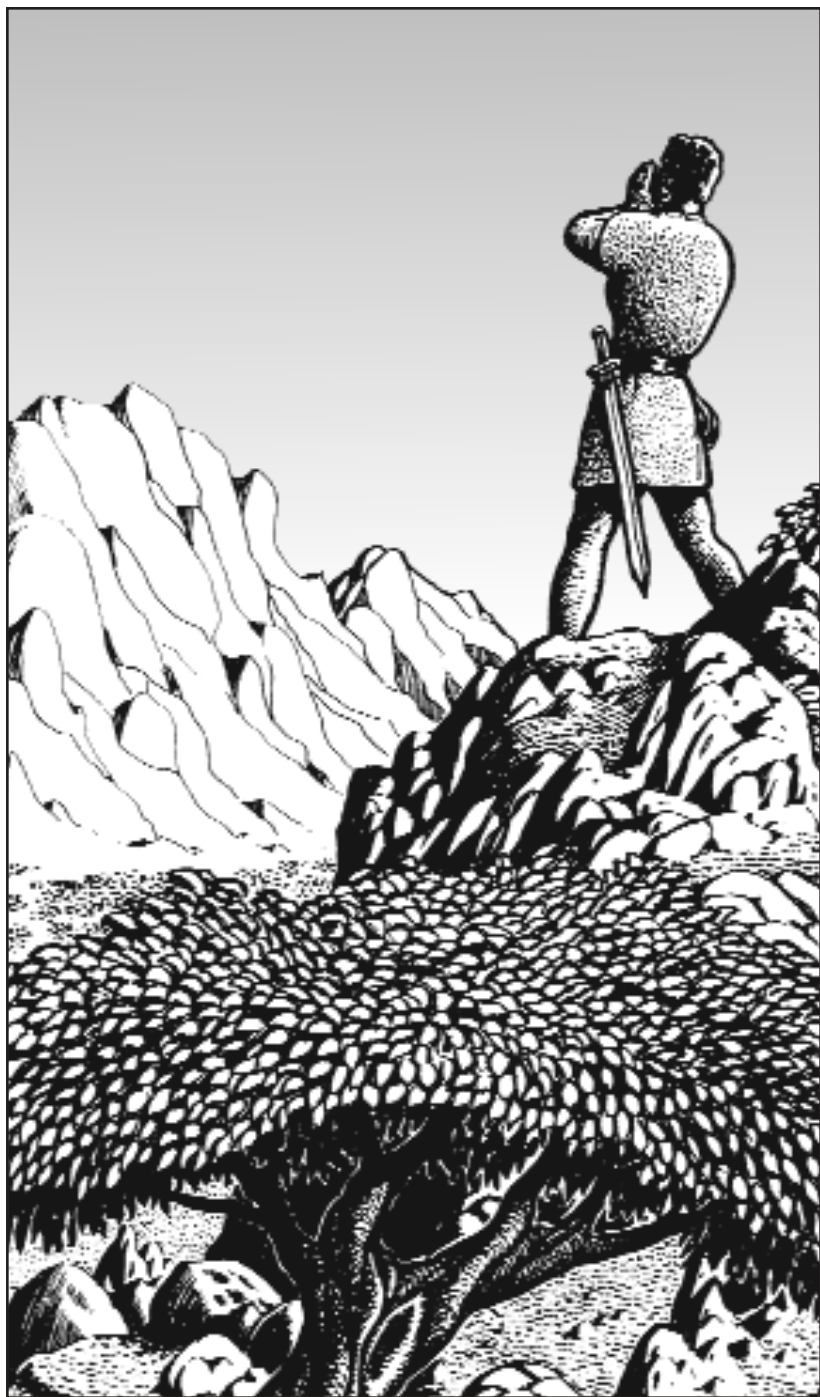
**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. The New Testament advises us to "test the spirits." Has someone given you advice that they claimed was from God, yet you doubted its validity?
2. David refused to abide by the ancient principle of "an eye for an eye." Nearly 3,000 years later, Martin Luther King, Jr., would teach his followers not to let themselves be dragged into hatred. Is David applying a similar principle here? How does this chapter fit in with Paul's advice in Romans 12:17-21?

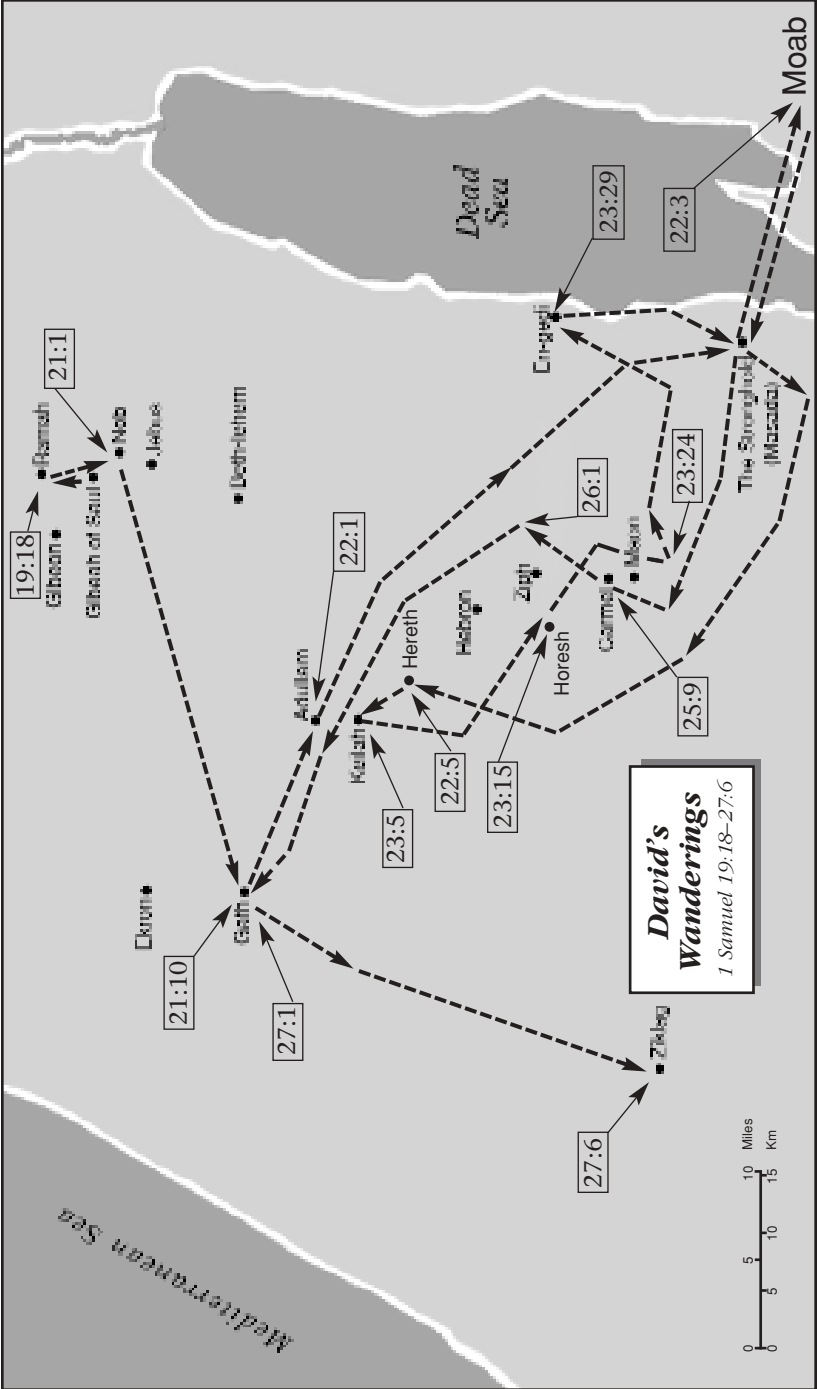
**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*The ancients put great stock in **double testimony** (Dt 19:15). This may be one reason that there are two similar accounts of David and Saul's close encounters in chapters 24 and 26. The writer of 1 Samuel is doubly emphasizing David's spiritual fitness for the kingship.*





Artwork by Basil Wolverton



# Dangerous Deceits

DAY 27

1 Samuel 27:1-12

Have things ever come to a point in your life that all seemed hopeless? Did you seek help?

1. How long did David hide out in enemy territory, the land of the Philistines (vs. 1-6)?
2. Note that David had his second and third wives with him at this time (v. 3). What was the name of his first wife (1Sa 19:11)?
3. David convinced the Philistine ruler of Gath that he had switched sides. What were David's responsibilities in his new post at Ziklag (vs. 8-9)?

The writer is showing us some of David's faults. David will be reminded of these actions later in life. Why did God forbid him from building the Temple (1Ch 22:6-10)? Has a past sin, mistake or bad decision ever resurfaced to trouble you? Does Jesus make all of the consequences of past sins miraculously go away—or is it possible he allows some of them to linger so we may develop wisdom and compassion for others?

***Polygamy** was considered normal for kings in the ancient middle east. But, this practice often created additional problems as the Law of Moses warned (Dt 17:14-17). It has been said that the Bible is often a record of what people did in spite of what God wanted. The Old Testament in particular is often descriptive of what happened rather than prescriptive of what should. The creation account shows God presenting Adam with only one wife, Eve. The Law of Moses did not encourage polygamy. It seems that those who were involved with it, from Abraham to Jacob, paid a heavy price. David was no exception.*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

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on the Word



Artwork by James Tissot

# Saul's Desperate Gambit

DAY 28

1 Samuel 28:1-25

Are any of your friends, family or acquaintances interested in the occult? What do you say when people discuss such matters?

1. Whom did Saul seek out as he encountered the Philistine army (vs. 1-8)?
2. What was the message the medium delivered (vs. 16-19)?
3. What was so ironic about this unlawful encounter (vs. 3, 9-10, 21)?

Should we be surprised to find out that demonic or occultish figures are sometimes able to accurately predict the future (Dt 13:1-5)? Are such predictions always accurate? Should Christ-followers fear any such predictions?

*Some biblical scholars feel that the "Samuel" who visited Saul at Endor was a demon spirit impersonating the prophet Samuel. Other scholars believe this was merely a hoax preformed by the medium. The subject of the **afterlife** is barely addressed in the Old Testament. The Israelites were a practical people not given to speculation on the hereafter or the fate of the dead. Their writings depict the afterlife, if at all, as a dark place of restricted and limited possibilities. They called it Sheol. The Hebrew silence about the fate of the dead supports the view that Saul was the victim of a psychic trick. The technical term for consulting spirits is **divination**. It is the art of obtaining hidden knowledge or knowledge of the future. Divination falls into two categories: (1) false divination or augury where trust is placed in the skill of the medium, seer or shaman, and (2) inspired divination. Here the medium is actually a channel for demonic spirits. Both forms were outlawed under the Law of Moses, and this warning is reinforced in the New Testament.*

## OPENING

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## DIGGING

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on the Word

## A Tangled Web

1 Samuel 29:1-15

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

You may have heard the old saying: “Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.” Have you found this to be true from personal experience?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** What was David’s military assignment in the Philistine expedition that was gathering against Israel (vs. 1-3)?

**2.** How did the Philistine high command react (vs. 3-10)?

**3.** David’s skill as a ruthless mercenary was matched by his ability to deceive Achish of Gath. Here he was put in the conscience-grinding position of having to contemplate fighting against Israelites, among them, Jonathan, his best friend. David’s spiritual lapse at Ziklag seemed to have been complete (Ps 42:9-10). Curiously, it was the Philistine high command that freed him from this predicament. The next chapter shows how God allowed a severe test to bring David to his senses.

**LIVING**  
out the Word

Have you been boxed in by your own mistakes or poor decisions? Did Jesus, by his grace, extricate you from the situation?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*The Israelite army was camped by a spring at **Jezeel**. There were two towns by that name, one of them in southern Judah. The one spoken of in this chapter seems to be the more famous town in the Plain of Esdraelon some 50-60 miles north of Jerusalem. The Plain of Esdraelon is also the site of Megiddo, which the book of Revelation uses as a symbol for the gathering of the kings of the earth against Jesus Christ. In ancient times this whole area was a strategic spot for traffic along the trade route between Egypt and Mesopotamia. The fortresses at Jezeel-Megiddo helped guard the passes through this large bowl-shaped valley in northern Israel. Later, Jezeel became one of King Ahab’s chariot cities, underscoring its strategic value. A fortress with a moat 36 meters wide has been found there.*

# Darkness Before Dawn

DAY 30

1 Samuel 30:1–31:13

Has your life ever changed quickly for the better—or worse? Is it better to be a pessimist or an optimist?

1. What trouble did David and his men encounter when they returned to their base in Ziklag (30:1-5)? What was David's first instinct when he realized what had happened (vs. 6-8)?
2. How did Saul die (31:1-6)? What grisly punishment did the Philistines inflict on Saul and his three sons (vs. 8-10)?
3. What sterling act of loyalty did the warriors of Jabesh-Gilead carry out for their first king (31:11-13)? What was significant about Jabesh-Gilead (11:1-15)?

1. Has an overwhelming sense of loyalty motivated you to rise to an occasion? Have you witnessed such actions?
2. If you were summing up the story of 1 Samuel would you describe it as a tragedy? A melodrama? Perhaps as another sad chapter of human foibles and failures that will eventually culminate in the gospel of Jesus Christ?!

*Again, biblical geography and anthropology may enable us to “flesh out” the story of David and Saul. **Tel Halif**, on the edge of the southern desert region called the Negev, has been proposed as the site of David's Ziklag. At **Gibeah**, just north of Jerusalem, excavators have uncovered a rectangular royal citadel with walls made of undressed blocks, and a square tower in the corner of the complex. This was “Gibeah of Saul” (1Sa 11:4; 15:34). The University Museum of Pennsylvania (1921-30) uncovered **Bethshan**. In the stratum of 1000 B.C. they found the foundations of a temple of Dagon, the very buildings in which Saul's armor and head were fastened. This is impressive evidence for the historic reliability of 1 Samuel and substantiates the fact that God keeps his promises.*

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