

David Spares Saul's Life (twice)

1 Samuel 23:14-24:22; 26

MEMORY VERSE

1 SAMUEL 26:23

“The LORD delivered you into my hand today, but I would not stretch out my hand against the LORD’S anointed.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Five small toys or balls.

Raisins, Cheerios, marshmallows, apples (pre-cut into small triangles) and toothpicks.

Blue, brown and black construction paper, glue, crayons or chalk.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Wait on the Lord Game

When David was in the wilderness he had to learn how to wait upon the Lord. Sometimes waiting is not easy. Use this game to illustrate waiting and how it is sometimes tough.

Divide the class into two even groups. Have one group on one side of the room and the second group on the other side of the room. Have each child count off from 1 - 10 (or up to the number of children in each group). You can give the younger children a small piece of paper with their number to help them remember. Lay out five small toys or balls in the center of the room. Pick two numbers and call them out. The children with those numbers will run, try to get as many toys as possible, and run back to their line.

Now, place the toys back in the center of the room. The second time that you call out numbers, call the same exact numbers. Do this again 3 or 4 times. By this time, the other children will be wondering when they will get called. After you have done this a while, stop the game and talk to the children. Ask them what was happening (the same children were being called). How did that make them feel? (Left out, etc.). How do you think David felt when he had to wait 10 years to be king? Say: "Sometimes it is not easy to wait for the Lord's timing; It helps to know He always has our best in mind." That's what we will learn in our story today.

Have the children line up and resume play. This time begin to call on the rest of the children and declare a winning team. You can award all of the children for being good sports by giving them a small prize (pencil, eraser, etc.).

LESSON TIME!

In today's lesson, David is running from the wrath of King Saul. So fierce was Saul's jealousy that he had tried to kill David. In the midst of his difficult situation, David will find an opportunity to get back at Saul. Will David seize this opportunity? Saul certainly had caused him problems.

1 SAMUEL 23:14-18

And David stayed in strongholds in the wilderness, and remained in the mountains in the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand.

So David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. And David was in the Wilderness of Ziph in a forest.

Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God.

And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Even my father Saul knows that."

So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. And David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went to his own house.

David and his small army of about six hundred men had been fighting for Israel while hiding from Saul in the town of Keilah. They had beaten the Philistines and saved the city, but the people of Keilah repaid David's kindness by betraying him to Saul. So David had to withdraw his six hundred men, the ones who remained faithful, and flee to the desert of Ziph. He was there briefly, joined by Jonathan who encouraged him and reaffirmed him of his calling and anointing to the kingship of Israel.

How faithful God is to encourage us when we need it; Jonathan the rightful heir to the throne, encourages David, who is running for his life, that he *will* in fact one day be king. God is faithful to encourage us when we get sad and discouraged. Perhaps, He will use His Word, our parents, or Christian friends.

No doubt, David needed that encouragement. How sad it would be to be betrayed by a people you tried to help. Anger or desire for revenge could have filled David's heart. But, instead he is learning the valuable lessons of patience and faith that can only come through such difficult experiences. **We should wait on the Lord—not take matters into our own hands.**

1 SAMUEL 23:19-29

Then the Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not hiding with us in strongholds in the woods, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon?"

"Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand."

And Saul said, "Blessed are you of the LORD, for you have compassion on me.

"Please go and find out for sure, and see the place where his hideout is, and who has seen him there. For I am told he is very crafty.

"See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hides; and come back to me with certainty, and I will go with you. And it shall be, if he is in the land, that I will search for him throughout all the clans of Judah."

So they arose and went to Ziph before Saul. But David and his men were in the Wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon.

When Saul and his men went to seek him, they told David. Therefore he went down to the rock, and stayed in the Wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued David in the Wilderness of Maon.

Then Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. So David made haste to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were encircling David and his men to take them.

But a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hasten and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land!"

Therefore Saul returned from pursuing David, and went against the Philistines; so they called that place the Rock of Escape.

Then David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi.

The Ziphites went up to Gibeah to betray David to Saul by telling Saul that David was hiding in the woods up on their mountains. And for this treachery, King Saul blessed them. In Saul's evil conscience, he thought David wanted to murder him and thanked God that the Ziphites had compassion upon him.

Saul was worried that David would escape so he told them to watch him carefully. However, David, aware of what was happening, escaped to the Desert of Maon. Saul pursued and found David on a mountain in the Wilderness of Maon and encircled him and his men. Saul had a few thousand men and David just a few hundred! It looked like Saul would finally kill David.

But God in His faithfulness protected David. Just when it looked the scariest for David, a messenger brought an urgent message to Saul. While Saul was busy chasing after David, the Philistines had invaded his land. Saul had to go back and defend the land from the Philistines. David now had opportunity to escape to the strongholds at En Gedi.

God delivered David from the hand of Saul. When we put our trust in the Lord, He will deliver us from all of our fears, our problems, and even our enemies. God keeps His promises. We need to trust Him. **We should wait on the Lord—not take matters into our own hands.**

1 SAMUEL 24:1-8

Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, "Take note! David is in the Wilderness of En Gedi."

Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats.

So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.)

Then the men of David said to him, "This is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.' " And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe.

And he said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD."

So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way.

David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down.

Saul returned from his fight against the Philistines. Informed that David had fled to En Gedi, Saul headed out with 3,000 men to find David and his men. While there, Saul found a cave and went into it to rest for a while. It just so happened that it was the same cave that David and his men were hiding in! When David's men heard this, they told David, "This is the day which the Lord said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand that you may do to him as it seems good to you.'"

Saul's life was now in David's hands. In fact, so close was Saul to David that he "secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe." How easily David could have killed Saul. He could have put an end to his life as a fugitive and become the new King of Israel. David had left home, family, and his dear friend because of Saul's obsession of killing him. The chance to end the bitter fighting had come. Yet David did not kill Saul; he only cut off a corner of his robe.

From the world's perspective, David missed his hour of opportunity and would prolong his suffering. But, what was God's perspective of the situation and David's reaction? Because David saw Saul as God's anointed, he felt bad for cutting off the corner of Saul's robe. David had no intention of harming Saul in any way; he would leave the situation in God's hands. If God wanted to punish Saul for his sin, God would do it. Through these situations, God was training David for his kingship, teaching him to be a kind and just king.

Has there ever been a time in your life when you have had opportunity to get back at someone who was being mean to you? What did you do? The Bible tells us that vengeance is the Lord's (Romans 12:17-20). That means that the Lord will take care of

people who treat us wrong. We should not “get back at people who mistreat us.” We need to pray for them and allow the Lord to take care of them and us. **We should wait on the Lord—not take matters into our own hands.**

David Spears a Meal

David always had to trust in the Lord for everything. During snack time reinforce how that God took care of all of David’s needs.

You will need raisins, cheerios, marshmallows, apples and toothpicks for the snack time.

Give a toothpick to each child. Tell them that this was like David’s spear. Have separate piles of raisins, cheerios, and marshmallows. Pre-slice the apples into small triangles (or spear heads). Have the children “spear” some raisins, cheerios and marshmallows. Then put the apple “spearhead” on the front tip of the toothpick. Then, the children enjoy their snack.

1 SAMUEL 26

Now the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not hiding in the hill of Hachilah, opposite Jeshimon?"

Then Saul arose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph.

And Saul encamped in the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon, by the road. But David stayed in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.

David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul had indeed come.

So David arose and came to the place where Saul had encamped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army. Now Saul lay within the camp, with the people encamped all around him.

Then David answered, and said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruah, brother of Joab, saying, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you."

So David and Abishai came to the people by night; and there Saul lay sleeping within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. And Abner and the people lay all around him.

Then Abishai said to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not have to strike him a second time!"

And David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?"

David said furthermore, "As the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish.

"The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed. But please, take now the spear and the jug of water that are by his head, and let us go."

So David took the spear and the jug of water by Saul's head, and they got away; and no man saw it or knew it or awoke. For they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them.

Now David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar off, a great distance being between them.

And David called out to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Do you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner answered and said, "Who are you, calling out to the king?"

So David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy your lord the king.

"This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not guarded your master, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the jug of water that was by his head."

Then Saul knew David's voice, and said, "Is that your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king."

And he said, "Why does my lord thus pursue his servant? For what have I done, or what evil is in my hand?"

"Now therefore, please, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant: If the LORD has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering. But if it is the children of men, may they be cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out this day from sharing in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.'

"So now, do not let my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD. For the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, as when one hunts a partridge in the mountains."

Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly."

And David answered and said, "Here is the king's spear. Let one of the young men come over and get it.

"May the LORD repay every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD delivered you into my hand today, but I would not stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed.

"And indeed, as your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the LORD, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation."

Then Saul said to David, "May you be blessed, my son David! You shall both do great things and also still prevail." So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

Now the Ziphites came to Saul, to tell him where David was, and Saul knowing that David is anointed of the Lord to someday be king, tried once more to upset the plan of God by seeking David's life. So Saul took with him three thousand chosen men of Israel and went down to the wilderness of Ziph.

David, hearing of Saul's arrival, sent out spies. When the spies confirmed that Saul had come, David went near to his camp and asked his men, "Who will go down with me?" Abishai agreed to accompany David, and they proceeded down to the place where Saul was sleeping. "A deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them." David removed Saul's water jug and spear without any man hearing.

David once again showed Saul amazing kindness in sparing his life. Saul was again trying to kill David, and again David finds opportunity to put an end to Saul's life and, thus, an end to his troubles. Once more, David determined to let God be his avenger; he would not have the king's blood on his hands. David stopped Abishai from killing Saul with his own spear.

David then went a good distance away and called to Saul's personal guard, Abner. He asked him why he did not protect his king. Saul recognized David's voice and asked if that was he speaking. David then revealed to the king what he had done that night and how God had delivered him into his hand. Saul, in the light of this kindness, sees the fool he has been. So evident to him was God's protection of his rival that he could only confess his own wickedness and recognize fully and finally that David was to be the shepherd of Israel. This was to be David and Saul's last meeting.

Kindness won in the end, without bloodshed. David learned valuable lessons through these difficult times. He learned how to treat people the way God would treat them. It could not have been

easy for David to be kind to Saul, for Saul had certainly not shown him kindness; but David hung in there, and the most important battle was won.

As David, let us represent God's heart to others. One of the chief characteristics of God is kindness, to the just and unjust. It is easy to be kind to those who are kind to us; but, to represent God's heart, we must show kindness to those who are unkind to us. God will deal with those who are unjust to us, if they do not turn from their sins. Remember, as David modeled, **we should wait on the Lord—not take matters into our own hands.**

Cave Craft

Our story today centers around how David did the right thing twice when he had the opportunity to take matters into his own hands. David learned to wait on the Lord. This craft will help the children to remember the story.

Use a sheet of dark blue construction paper for the night sky (background). Using brown construction paper, cut out a cave and glue to the blue paper. Next, cut out a black circle using black construction paper. Glue the black circle onto the cave for an entrance. Using white or yellow crayon or chalk, write the memory verse on top of the "night's sky" and color in stars and moon.

For some of the children as an option they can draw the characters from the story in and around the cave.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to wait upon the Lord and not to take matters into their own hands. May others see kindness in their lives and glorify God. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity.