



Lethbridge
First Baptist
Church

God's Story in

1 Samuel

A Devotional Guide through 1 Samuel

October 2026

This daily devotional guide is meant to help you explore the Scriptures in our sermon series on 1 Samuel. Each week, we will explore the passage that will be preached on the upcoming Sunday.

Each day, a portion of the passage is provided to you to read or listen to. You may do this individually or with your household. Feel free to do this in whatever version you find most helpful. A key verse from each portion will be given. The default Bible version used in this devotional guide is the New International Version (NIV). If a different version is used, it will be indicated. If you're feeling extra ambitious, you might consider spending an additional 5–10 minutes meditating on this key verse, or maybe even memorize one of the key verses of the week.

A short devotional is provided for you with questions to consider for application, prayer, or discussion. Finally, a short prayer may be provided in italics. These prayers are meant to assist you in finding words for your personal prayers with God.

It is our prayer that these daily devotionals will help your walk with God so that you may encounter him daily and grow in faith and love.

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Thursday, October 1

Read or listen to 1 Sam 21:10–15.

Key verse: David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. So David pretended to be insane in their presence.” (1 Sam 21:12–13)

David flees Saul’s sword and takes refuge with Achish, the Philistine king of Gath. But while David is there, the local gossip catches up with him. Achish’s servants whisper to the king about David’s renown as a warrior and his popularity with the people of Israel. The king realizes that he has a valuable ransom on his hands; Saul would pay a pretty penny to get his hands on his rival.

David realizes his position is precarious, so he pretends to be insane. He fully commits to this act, scratching on the doors of the gate and letting drool drip down his beard. The king, disgusted, wants nothing to do with him. He lets David go without repercussions.

This is a wild story. It makes us ask questions like, “Is it right to lie to protect ourselves?” Notice David’s key emotion in this passage: he is *very much afraid* of King Achish. Unlike other instances, David does not consult God on the best course of action. He acts out of his panic, and in this case, it works out for him. This story is not a guide for how we should behave, but a warning—who or what guides our decision-making? Is it our panic and fear? Is it possible to pause, even when we are afraid, and ask God what he would have us to do next? Talk to God about it.

Friday, October 2

Read or listen to Ps 56:1–13.

Key verse: I praise God for what he has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me? (Ps 56:4, NLT)

Life can feel overwhelming. In our readings this week, David has been hotly pursued and almost overcome, he was provided for by the bread of the tabernacle, and he took temporary refuge in the stronghold of Israel's sworn enemy in a last-ditch effort to evade Saul. I think it's fair to say that David felt overwhelmed.

The heading of Psalm 56 says that David wrote it about the time when the Philistines seized him in Gath.¹ When all hope is nearly lost, David wrote psalms—prayers that express the deepest anguish and sorrow of his heart.

When you feel overwhelmed, where do you turn? How do you tend to express your sorrow, grief, anguish, or pain? Songs and poetry have a way of expressing our hearts in ways that our rational brains overlook. What song, poem, psalm, or prayer can you read or listen to today to express what is going on in your heart? Perhaps you might read Psalm 56 again and meditate on the trustworthiness of God when life becomes too much.

¹ This could potentially refer to another instance in David's life (1 Sam 29), but in either case, he is in the city of his enemy.

Saturday, October 3

Read or listen to Ps 34:1–22.

Key verse: Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh the joys of those who take refuge in him! (Ps 34:8, NLT)

This psalm, written about the time when David pretended to be insane in Achish's court,² tells us something that the account in 1 Samuel does not—that David is aware of God's presence and sovereignty even as he pretends insanity. This psalm provides an additional lens through which to read the 1 Samuel account. Does this mean that 1 Samuel was incorrect? No, not at all! The best stories are told through multiple perspectives. While the author of 1 Samuel describes David's sanity from a detached, omniscient perspective, David himself records his thoughts and feelings in the psalm. What do we learn?

We learn that David, despite his fear, praises God “constantly.” He boasts “only in the Lord,” not in his own strength, and he will tell others of the Lord's greatness. He attributes his release from Achish's hand to the Lord, who also delivered David from his fears. His faith in God is strengthened as a result of his encounter with the king. Finally, he encourages his listeners to hold fast to God, to keep praying, and to persevere in faith despite their troubles. His words have authority because of his lived experiences.

Consider a time when you have been afraid but acted in faith anyway. Have you told others this story? Telling others about God's faithfulness in our lives is a main way that we can encourage others. Tell someone your story today, and listen to theirs.

² Note that the heading refers to “Abimelek,” which is a royal title for Philistine kings just like “Pharaoh” is a title for Egyptian kings.

Sunday, October 4

If you have the time, read or listen to 1 Sam 21.

What stands out to you from the passage this week? What do you still have questions about?

What does this passage show you about the character of God? Where was he present or absent?

Meditate on Ps 34:4–6 today.

I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me.

He freed me from all my fears.

*Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy;
no shadow of shame will darken their faces.*

*In my desperation I prayed, and the Lord listened;
he saved me from all my troubles. Amen.*

Sunday Sermon Notes

Monday, October 5

Read or listen to 1 Sam 22:1–4.

Key verse: Then others began coming—men who were in trouble or in debt or who were just discontented—until David was captain of about 400 men. (1 Sam 22:2, NLT)

Others took refuge with David. Some were in trouble, financial or otherwise, and others were simply unhappy with the way Saul was running things. This verse always strikes me as deeply significant—even before David is king, he is a person with whom others feel safe (even while he is on the run from Saul!). These men considered it better to be at David's side than to serve a wildly unstable king.

Our political situation in Alberta is considerably more stable than a fledgling monarchy that was struggling to keep its foothold in a land where power was constantly changing hands. Even so, we are feeling uncertain about our government, the referendum, and ensuing political polarity.

Who or what do you turn to for safety when life feels uncertain? Do you have safe people in your life, who somehow are unrocked by the waves of unstable politics and economics? Are you that stable person for others?

Ultimately, *God* is our rock and refuge, and his Spirit gives each of us strength to be pockets of peacefulness during tumultuous times as we lean on him. We are not alone.

*O Lord Jesus, acknowledge what belongs to you in us, and take away from us all that is not of yours; for the sake of your honour and glory. Amen.*³

³ Bernardino of Siena, 1380–1444.

Tuesday, October 6

Read or listen to Ps 142:1–7.

Key verse: Then I pray to you, O Lord. I say, “You are my place of refuge. You are all I really want in life.” (Ps 142:5, NLT)

David’s psalms are desperately honest. He cries out for God’s mercy; he is on the run, beaten down, and tired, and he pours out all his complaints to God and tells him all his troubles. He continually turns to God for direction, peace, and help. Even when it seems like everyone else has abandoned him, he continues crying out to God.

Sometimes it seems like the skies are iron; our prayers fall back to earth as if they are locked out of heaven. David kept on praying. He did not give up. His truest desire, more than safety, comfort, and the promised kingship, was *God*.

We would do well to pay attention to this bit of wisdom: all our desires are met in God. Our deepest desires for belonging, family, safety, security, stability, and peace are met in God, because he is *love*. At the end of the day, each of our desires is rooted in a desire to be loved—deeply and authentically. It’s a scary thing, to be truly loved as we are in all our brokenness and misguided ambitions. But God, the One who created you, knows *exactly what your soul needs*. To admit your deepest desire is to accept God’s love *for you*, because he is safe. He is secure. He is where you belong. He invites you to join him in an ever-deeper quest to commune with him in love and to align your heart with his. Which desire of your heart do you want to tell God today?

*Lord, without words, in the stillness, you are there . . . And I love you. Lord, teach me to pray.*⁴

⁴ Eddie Askew, 1927–2007.

Wednesday, October 7

Read or listen to 1 Sam 22:6–19.

Key verse: “Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me?” demanded Saul. (1 Sam 22:13, NLT)

Saul’s paranoia has spiraled dangerously out of control. He sees spies and traitors under every rock—even in the tabernacle of God. In a devastatingly cruel act, Saul, the man who was supposed to protect and provide for his people as their king, orders the priests killed out of paranoia and revenge.

The dichotomy of faith and fear continues to play out in 1 Samuel. Saul allows fear to rule his life; he is king in name, but his reign is subservient to his fear. His fear that his rule will be taken away (as God promised it would be) makes him do crazy things. Saul’s men, however, refuse to kill the priests, choosing to fear *God* over their king. It is a foreigner, Doeg the Edomite, who slaughters the town of the priests.

Fear is a protective mechanism against the dangers in our world. Fear keeps us safe. But fear, when it gets out of control, becomes an overly-sensitive alarm system that blares its warning whenever the temperature gets too hot. It’s no longer accurate or helpful; it’s just stressful.

What are you afraid of? We’ve been talking about this for a while, so there may be something that immediately comes to mind. Is your fear proportional to the event, or has it spiraled out of control? What might it look like to fear *God* more than whatever you’re afraid of?

*Love of Jesus, fill us, / Joy of Jesus, surprise us, / Peace of Jesus, flood us, / Light of Jesus, transform us.*⁵

⁵ Angela Ashwin, *The Book of a Thousand Prayers*.

Thursday, October 8

Read or listen to Ps 52:1–9.

Today, we will be practicing *lectio divina* again.

First, read the passage slowly all the way through.

Now, read it again and notice which phrase or word stands out to you. Mull it over for a while.

Read it a third time and consider: What is God inviting you to from this passage? It may be a fresh way of viewing his character or it might be a conviction or challenge to you for today. Remember: conviction leads to hope. This is the Spirit's way of inviting you into transformation. Guilt leads to self-loathing and condemnation, and it is *not* from the Spirit of God.

God is inviting me to _____.

Lastly, read through the passage a fourth time and rest in the presence of God. How are you being moved to respond?

When you are ready, close with a prayer of gratitude to God for meeting you here in Scripture.

Friday, October 9

Read or listen to 1 Sam 22:20–23.

Key verse: “Stay here with me, and don’t be afraid. I will protect you with my own life, for the same person wants to kill us both.” (1 Sam 22:23, NLT)

David offers his own life to protect Abiathar, the lone priest who escapes the massacre. He feels responsible for what happened—after all, if he hadn’t approached Ahimelech for bread and provisions, the priests would still be alive. This is not the same thing as doing *penance* (the practice of self-punishment to somehow balance the scales of right and wrong). Instead, David takes *responsibility* for his ill-thought-out plan.

There are moments in life when we deeply regret what we’ve done. There were consequences that we didn’t foresee, and people got hurt. We might look back and wish that we could have done it differently. But alas, it is what it is, and now we must endure the fallout.

There is another angle to this story: the killing of the priests is in fulfillment of God’s prophecy against Eli and his family for their unfaithfulness (1 Sam 2:27–36). We are reminded that *God is in control of this story and he always pursues justice*. It is not David’s fault; God had a bigger plan in mind, one that offers consequences to Eli’s family for the ways in which they mocked God and mistreated the people.

When something wrong happens, our response takes two parts: 1) We take responsibility for our mistakes, and 2) we trust that God is sovereign and trustworthy to carry out his justice. Which part do you need to act on today? Talk to God about it.

Saturday, October 10

Read or listen to Ps 130:1–8.

Key verse: I wait for the Lord; I wait and put my hope in his word. (Ps 130:5, CSB)

Hope. We can't live without it. As Christians, our hope is in God's promises to provide for us, to care for us, to love us, and to do good things for us. Of course, the fulfillment of these promises doesn't always look like material provisions or things that our world defines as good. No, God provides what *he* says is good.

On the other hand, I think we can all describe things that are *very good*: a perfect spaghetti dinner in which the acidity of the tomato and the sweetness of the basil are balanced, a warm summer day spent lazing in the sun or playing in the water, a riotous game of Dutch Blitz with family or friends, or a cozy cup of coffee or tea as you watch the rain fall.

Whatever is good can only come from God, because he is fundamentally *good* in his character and nature. Because this is true, we can have hope that he will *always* pursue the goodness of his creation.

What good things can you identify in your life today—things make you smile and have hope that God is up to something very good in this world?

Scan this QR code to watch a video on how hope is based on the unchanging character of God. Talk to him about it.



Sunday, October 11

Read or listen to 1 Sam 22.

What stands out to you from the passage this week? What do you still have questions about?

What does this passage show you about the character of God? Where was he present or absent?

*God bless this city
and move our hearts with pity
lest we grow hard.
God bless this place
with silence, solitude, and space
that we may pray.
God bless these days
of rough and narrow ways
lest we despair.
God bless the night
and calm the people's fright
that we may love.
God bless this land
and guide us with your hand
lest we be unjust.
God bless this earth
through pangs of death and birth
and make us whole. Amen.⁶*

⁶ Jim Cotter, *Prayer in the Morning*.

Sunday Sermon Notes

Monday, October 12 (Thanksgiving Day)

Read or listen to 1 Sam 23:1–5.

Key verse: Once again, David inquired of the Lord, and the Lord answered him, “Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand.” (1 Sam 23:4)

The Philistines are taking the harvests of the Israelites. Everything that they’d worked hard at growing and harvesting is stolen; their harvest celebration is one filled with fear instead of thankfulness.

Sometimes, it is easier to focus on the things that we feel are being “taken” from us: our wages aren’t increased along with the rising inflation rates, our health isn’t what we hoped for, our loved ones don’t make the choices that we wanted, or an anticipated job doesn’t pan out.

David responds to the crisis by asking God what to do. God answers him. His men are afraid, so he asks God again, and God answers him. David’s first response to crisis is to ask God and trust that God will speak to them and guide them.

This Thanksgiving, take a moment to consider the things that you feel have been stolen from you. Write them down and tell God about what you feel about this. And then, ask him to speak to you about it. What do you hear?

Almighty God, in whom we live and move and have our being, you have made us for yourself, so that our hearts are restless till they rest in you.⁷

⁷ Augustine, 354–430.

Tuesday, October 13

Read or listen to 1 Sam 23:6–14.

Key verse: Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands. (1 Sam 23:14)

Saul chases David. David is betrayed. David continues to ask God for direction. God tells David what to do and protects him. Round and round it goes, a cycle that seems unending. But the hinge of this cycle lies on David repeatedly searching for God's direction in his distress.

In times of seemingly unending crisis, this is all we can do: continually search for God's direction. We pray and pray. Nothing happens, but we keep praying, because we don't know what else to do. Sometimes, God is silent. Other times, he may speak to you in the comfort of a friend, a song, or Scripture. The Christian life is never guaranteed to be easy, but God promises to never leave us.

What do you need to say to God today? What is he saying to you?

*Dear God, be good to me; / the sea is so large, / and my boat is so small.*⁸

⁸ Prayer of a Breton fisherman, c. 6th century

Wednesday, October 14

Read or listen to 1 Sam 23:15–29.

Key verse: Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. (1 Sam 23:16)

Jonathan is a true friend to David. Despite the danger of being killed if Saul discovered he was aiding David, Jonathan journeys to David for the express purpose of encouraging him. They make a covenant of friendship again—most likely reaffirming Jonathan's allegiance to David's kingship and David's protection of Jonathan's family (see 1 Sam 18:1–4).

Friendship is a recurring theme with Jonathan and David. It makes us ask, "Who do I have around me that encourages and supports me?" Can you list 2–3 friends who are like Jonathan to you? If not, consider the people in your life—who could you be a Jonathan to? Friendships are hard and risky relationships, but a true friend, as the book of Proverbs says, sticks closer even than blood family (Prov 18:24). Talk to God about your friendships or your desire for friendships.

Dear God, thank you for being my constant friend. I ask that you bring new friendships into my life that would help me grow closer to you. Please help me find supportive people and give me the courage to be open and honest so our new friendship can thrive. Friendship is your design, and I pray that I won't take it for granted. Help me to love and serve my friends well. In Jesus' name, Amen.⁹

⁹ <https://finds.life.church/prayers-for-new-friendship/>

Thursday, October 15

Read or listen to 1 Sam 24:1–22.

Key verse: “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 Sam 24:12)

Saul continues pursuing David, now with 3,000 soldiers to back him up. While Saul takes a water break inside a cave, David sneaks up to him and cuts off a corner of Saul’s robe as evidence that he could have killed Saul if he had wanted to. Upon this knowledge, Saul is chastened. He weeps aloud and declares David’s righteousness. He even proclaims that David “will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established” in David’s hands. Saul is humbled by David’s mercy.

David’s men urged David to kill Saul. *End the king’s life, and we will be free.* But David fears God more than Saul; he knows that God had anointed Saul as king, and he refuses to take Saul’s life. And thus, the cycle continues.

When someone treats you poorly, how do you respond? It may be easier to exact your revenge on them or consider how you could cut that person out of your life forever. It’s much harder to show mercy and forgiveness. Saul continues plaguing David, but the temptation of relief from Saul’s persecution is not enough to convince David to treat Saul poorly in return. He still shows Saul respect, though Saul had done nothing to deserve it.

If there is someone in your life who treats you badly, talk to God about it. How can you show them mercy today, even if they have done nothing to deserve it?

Friday, October 16

Read or listen to Ps 59:1–17.

Key verse: I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. (Ps 59:16)

This psalm is one of many that were written while David was on the run from Saul. David has literal enemies lying in wait to kill him, though he has done nothing wrong. He has been a faithful soldier in Saul's army, but his loyalty is treated as if it were a betrayal. David calls on God to help him in his trouble. He writes *three times* that God is a fortress, a trustworthy refuge in his time of need.

You may have known betrayal from a friend, employer, colleague, or family member. This is a deeply painful experience. Which part of this psalm speaks most closely to that experience? How can you allow this psalm to express the pain, desperation, or hope that you need to say today? Write out the phrase that sticks out to you below and return to it throughout the day whenever you think of that person or situation.

Saturday, October 17

Read or listen to Ps 58:1–11.

Key verse: May they be like a slug that melts away as it moves along, like a stillborn child that never sees the sun. (Ps 58:8)

Psalms like this one are called *imprecatory psalms*. These are the “angry” psalms that often contain uncomfortable phrases like the key verse above. What are we to do with these psalms? Surely, Jesus wants us to love our enemies, and so we shouldn’t pray for them to melt away or die like a stillborn child . . . right?

Yes, *but* imprecatory psalms have a place in expressing our anger and lament against injustice. We can’t simply say, “God loves everyone,” and continue on our merry way as if there weren’t millions of people suffering from economic inequity, food scarcity, and slavery every single day. Every part of Scripture is there for a reason, and these psalms help us to express our grief and rage to God. God can handle our anger, after all, and we need safe places to express it so that it does not harm others. I once heard someone wise say, “I listen to angry music so that I don’t hurt others.”

Re-read this psalm and allow it to express your anger at whatever injustice you noticed today.

Sunday, October 18

If you have the time, read or listen to 1 Sam 23–24.

What stands out to you from the passage this week? What do you still have questions about?

What does this passage show you about the character of God? Where was he present or absent?

Watch this video about how God is slow to anger and rich in mercy. How does knowing this fundamental truth about God's character shape how you want to live as his child?



Sunday Sermon Notes

Monday, October 19

Read or listen to 1 Sam 25:1–8.

Key verse: Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him in his home in Ramah. (1 Sam 25:1)

In one sentence, the last judge of Israel and the great spiritual giant of the early monarchy of Israel is gone. Samuel had left Saul back in chapter 15 and anointed David in chapter 16. Once, in chapter 19, David fled to Samuel to escape Saul, but since then Samuel has been absent. Now he is well and truly absent from Israel, leaving the prophet Gad and priest Abiathar to advise David, while there is no one named as Saul's spiritual advisor.

Saul and Samuel both disappear from the narrative in this chapter. The book of 1 Samuel is intercut with this story about Nabal and his wife, Abigail, which behaves as test case for David: will David continue to wait patiently for God to intervene, or will he take vengeance upon his enemies and become king on his own terms? The absence of Samuel creates tension. Will David make the right choice even if the prophet who anointed him is no longer present?

Consider whether you have had spiritual mentors or leaders to guide you. If you have had them, how have they influenced your life and faith? If you haven't, who could you seek out to be that advisor in your life? Who could you be a mentor to?

God, thank you for those who have been/are mentors and advisors to me. I pray that you might give them your wisdom. Help me to be that mentor to _____. Amen.

Tuesday, October 20

Read or listen to 1 Sam 25:9–13.

Key verse: David said to his men, “Each of you strap on your sword!” (1 Sam 25:13)

Nabal insults David by refusing to provide any food for his men, despite their having protected Nabal’s shepherds during sheep-shearing. This is a gross violation of the ancient norms of hospitality. David is offended and responds hotly, strapping on his sword and readying for battle. Nabal doesn’t have the protection of being God’s anointed to save him; David doesn’t hesitate to carry out his wounded pride on this cruel landowner.

Last week, we read the story of how David spared Saul’s life, even though Saul repeatedly hunts David down and wants to kill him. This week, David is insulted and he responds by going to war. The contrast should cause us to pause: does David act differently depending on *who* he is confronted by? Why would this make a difference?

It causes us to examine our own lives, too: does our capacity for mercy and grace change depending on who we are interacting with? Do you have more patience and kindness for one person and not another? Talk to God honestly about this. What might be driving the differences in your behaviour?

God, I see where I have treated others differently depending on who they are or what their standing is. Help me to love others equally, as you have loved me. Amen.

Wednesday, October 21

Read or listen to 1 Sam 25:14–31.

Key verse: “Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say.” (1 Sam 25:24)

Enter Abigail, Nabal’s “intelligent and beautiful” wife. When she finds out that her husband has insulted David, she acts quickly. She loads her donkeys with more than enough food for David’s men and meets David in a mountain ravine. She intercedes on behalf of her husband, whose name means, “Fool.” She knows Nabal acted poorly, but she intercedes on his behalf. In short, she acts just as a prophet or priest would, taking on Samuel’s mantle in this situation. She reminds David to be a man of righteousness, rather than needless bloodshed, just he has been in his relationship with Saul.

Consider a time when someone else has intervened for you in a moment where you might have made a rash, harmful decision. Who or what was able to make you pause and reconsider your actions? (Again, this is where having good spiritual mentors or friends is helpful.) Talk to God about the impact this has made on your life.

God, thank you for those who have been patient with me and who have risked our friendship to correct me when I’ve been on a harmful track. Help me to be patient with them and listen to their intervention so that I might reflect your character more truly. Amen.

Thursday, October 22

Read or listen to 1 Sam 25:32–38.

Key verse: “May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day.” (1 Sam 25:33)

David accepts Abigail’s intervention. He praises God and blesses her for her courage and discernment. He is reminded of who he is—a king who relies on God’s protection and guidance. Perhaps he was looking for a pressure release for all the stress from being chased by Saul, but now he realizes that unleashing his wrath on Nabal as a scapegoat is inappropriate.

As it turns out, God didn’t need David to rush headlong into battle to defend himself; God strikes Nabal with something like a heart attack or a stroke, and Nabal dies ten days later.

If Nabal and Saul are mirrors of one another—both fools who insult David and disregard God’s laws—then David’s retreat from killing Nabal and God’s divine judgment of Nabal foreshadows what will come for Saul: God will judge Saul in his own time. David waits patiently for God’s timing.

We often get impatient with our desired timeline for God’s justice. “Why doesn’t God do *something*?” we ask. But what if he’s waiting for that person to turn to him? What if he’s giving them another chance, and another, because he is patiently waiting for them to repent?

Instead of exacting our own vengeance on those who have hurt us, how can we turn our prayers of anger into prayers for their return to God? And if they do not, well, their judgment belongs to God.

Lord, your kingdom come, your will be done. Amen.

Friday, October 23

Read or listen to 1 Sam 25:39–44.

Key verse: “Praise be to the Lord, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal’s wrongdoing down on his own head.” (1 Sam 25:39)

God’s judgment can take on the appearance of divine intervention, like striking Nabal with a dramatic medical condition. It can also happen as a consequence of our actions. Smoking a pack a day often results in emphysema or lung cancer. Eating processed and high-sugar foods results in diabetes. Treating others with contempt or disrespect results in having few friends. This is a bit oversimplified, but you get the point. It’s the concept of “you reap what you sow.” (Gal 6:7)

However, if you sow good things—treating others kindly, loving your neighbour, being honest, and taking care of creation—you will likely reap the good things of friendship, mutual respect, trust, and connection to God through nature. This doesn’t mean that all will go perfectly in your life from here on out, but that your actions build your character, for better or worse. David’s violence would have reaped death; Abigail’s wisdom reaped peace. What kind of character are your actions building?

Lord, grant me the wisdom to hold my tongue and the patience to let others have their say. May my choices reflect your character, my good and gracious God.

Saturday, October 24

Read or listen to Ps 141:1–10.

Key verse: I look to you for help, O Sovereign Lord. You are my refuge; don't let them kill me. (Ps 141:8, NLT)

David's hot emotions are jolted back to reality when Abigail confronts him. In all previous cases, David had inquired of God before going to battle; in this case, he does not, but God still intervenes, acting through Abigail to bring about peace rather than unnecessary death.

When your emotions run hot, you may be tempted to plow ahead without asking God for his wisdom or direction. It can be helpful to stop and take a breath when this happens. Maybe talk to your spiritual mentor. Definitely talk to God and then *wait* to hear from him. All too often, we throw up a prayer and then, when we don't hear anything after a minute, run along on our mission anyway. *I prayed about it*, we say. But did we, really?

Prayer requires *listening* as well as talking. It's a conversation—a relationship—not a one-sided phone call. To really hear from God, we need to take time to *listen* for what he is saying, especially when emotions run hot.

How can you spend time listening to God today or this week? Put aside any distractions—your phone, schedule, email, chores—and *listen*.

Sunday, October 25

If you have the time, read or listen to 1 Sam 25.

What stands out to you from this passage? Do you have any lingering questions about it?

What does this passage show you about the character of God? Where was he present or absent?

Write or draw a prayer to God today. Use whatever creative expression you have to talk to God about what you read in 1 Samuel this week, what's going on in your heart and life, and what you need from him. He's listening.

Sunday Sermon Notes

Monday, October 26

Read or listen to 1 Sam 26:1–12.

Key verse: “Who can lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless?” (1 Sam 26:9)

Again, David is being hunted by Saul. Again, he has an opportunity to kill his enemy. Again, he refuses.

When someone or something is causing us seemingly never-ending grief, how do we respond? I’m not sure about you, but I certainly want to be rid of it. I don’t think I would have faulted David if he had killed Saul right then and there. Clearly, David’s men thought the same.

But David refuses. He still considers Saul God’s anointed king. He is aware—perhaps even more acutely after having come from God’s divine intervention with Nabal—that God will carry out his justice in *God’s* own timing. David knows that he has been anointed the next king of Israel, but he does not rush the process. We might ask why it took God so long to intervene on David’s behalf if he had rejected Saul back in chapter 15. At this point in time, Saul has been hunting David for about a decade. Why does God wait?

It’s quite simple, though we often don’t like the answer, especially when it pertains to our enemies: *mercy*. God shows mercy to Saul. He patiently waits for Saul to return to him, giving him chance after chance to repent—just as he has done for you.

How can you pray for your enemies today? How does knowing God’s mercy *for you* impact your prayer for your enemies?

Tuesday, October 27

Read or listen to Ps 54:1–7.

Key verse: Surely, God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me. (Ps 54:4)

Today, we will be practicing *lectio divina* again.

First, read the passage slowly all the way through.

Now, read it again and notice which phrase or word stands out to you. Mull it over for a while.

Read it a third time and consider: What is God inviting you to from this passage? It may be a fresh way of viewing his character or it might be a conviction or challenge to you for today. Remember: conviction leads to hope. This is the Spirit's way of inviting you into transformation. Guilt leads to self-loathing and condemnation, and it is *not* from the Spirit of God.

God is inviting me to _____.

Lastly, read through the passage a fourth time and rest in the presence of God. How are you being moved to respond?

When you are ready, close with a prayer of gratitude to God for meeting you here in Scripture.

Wednesday, October 28

Read or listen to Ps 86:1–17.

Key verse: Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. (Ps 86:11)

David refused to listen to the voices that would have him kill the king. What a temptation that must have been! If Saul was gone, then David would no longer need to be on the run. If Saul was dead, then David could finally rise to the call to which God had anointed him so many years ago.

What sorts of temptations lure you away from God's call on your life? To David, the temptation must have seemed like divine intervention—God had anointed him as king, and now Saul lies asleep at his feet. He's practically begging David to kill him and become king himself! But David doesn't see it that way. He does not mistake *his* actions for *God's* intervention. He trusts that God will do as he said he would do, and that he doesn't need David to carry it out.

How can you trust God's timing and provision for you today? You might have a clear call for where God wants you in your future, but you don't know how to get there. It's tempting to take matters into your own hands. What might it look like for you to say, "Your will be done, O God," and take your hands off the matter entirely?

*Lord, you are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you. Hear my prayer, Lord. Amen.*¹⁰

¹⁰ Ps 86:5–6

Thursday, October 29

Read or listen to 1 Sam 26:13–25.

Key verse: “The Lord rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The Lord delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed.” (1 Sam 26:23)

David attributes the deliverance of Saul into his hands to the Lord. Sometimes, God tests us. He places circumstances before us that look an awful lot like divine intervention. Surely, if God put this opportunity in front of us, then he wants us to follow through with it . . . right?

I grew up with the idea of “open doors.” If God “opened a door” in front of me, then it meant that I should walk through it. If he closed it, then it wasn’t meant to be. While this can be useful in discerning whether or not to do something, the story of David tells us that this is not always true. Just because an opportunity stands open before us doesn’t mean that we should go through with it. But how can we know?

This process is called *discernment*. Though David was given an opportunity to kill Saul and take the kingship for himself, he recognized that doing so would make him a murderer and usurper of the throne. He would get momentary glory, but then Saul’s family would rise up against him and civil war would ensue. The repercussions of his actions would work *against* him instead of *for* him if he took matters into his own hands.

Discernment is the ability to see clearly when we are presented with two (or more) options. What are you discerning today? Talk to God about your options: If you do _____, then what happens? What is he telling you?

Friday, October 30

Read or listen to Ps 20:1–9.

Key verse: Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. (Ps 20:7)

In the process of discernment, we run up against the things in which we put our trust. As you talk to God about the things that you are discerning, consider where Option A or Option B places its trust. Is it in you—your strength, abilities, talents, and grit? Or is it in God’s strength and timing?

If I’ve learned anything about discernment, it’s that it requires me to give up what I think I desire in the moment and place those desires in God’s hands. Our *desires* aren’t bad or evil, but on their own, they can lead to doing things like killing the king to get him out of the way for our ambition. David puts his trust in God rather than in his own spear. This is the practice of *spiritual indifference*—saying, “God, I give up all pretensions of doing what *I* want, because I trust that *you* know best.”

Discernment and trust require humility. And truly, this can be *humiliating* at times, because we recognize where our strength and abilities are desperately limited. We come face to face with the fact that *we cannot do it ourselves*. Trust says, “Your will be done. Full stop.”

Meditate on the key verse today. What does it look like to trust God more than chariots and horses (aka money, possessions, career, good grades, being liked)?

Saturday, October 31

Read or listen to Ps 25:1–22.

Key verse: Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my
Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. (Ps 25:4–5)

Write down one thing that you are wrestling with or
struggling to discern this week.

What motivations or desires are driving your decision?
Name them without judgment.

How is God inviting you to trust him with those desires and
motivations today?

*In You, Lord my God, I put my trust. I trust in you; do not let
me be put to shame. Amen.*¹¹

¹¹ Ps 25:1–2

