



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What is your favorite means of determining God's will?

Read 1 Samuel 23:1-6. Why are David's men reluctant to go to Keilah? Why is David resolved to proceed? When faced with a similar call to arms, are you more likely to respond as David's men or David? Why?

Read 1 Samuel 23:21. What irony do you find in Saul's comment? In what ways have you seen similar irony in modern times?

Read 1 Samuel 23:15-18. What role does Jonathan play in David's life? In terms of friendship, what observations do you see in the words Jonathan speaks to David? How has a friend helped you "find strength in God?" In what ways have you had opportunity to do similarly?

Read 1 Samuel 24:1-7. Why do you think David chose not to take Saul's life? Do you believe that it would have been a sin for him to do so? Why?

Read 1 Samuel 24:8-15. What reasons does David give Saul to believe he is not a threat? Have you ever been in a similar situation, attempting to convince someone of your loyalty, friendship or integrity? What reasons did you point out? How was it received?

Read 1 Samuel 23:10. Do you think God is in full control of all danger to us?

Do you think Saul's response is authentic in 1 Samuel 24:16-22? Why or why not?



1 Samuel 23-24

Dilemma: Cutting Robes & Slack

Dilemma: a situation in which a difficult choice needs to be made between two or more alternatives, especially if there is something about the choice that makes it difficult:

Bad – bad; Bad – good; Good – good. (the dilemma is you must decide)

Saul has been pursuing David. This is “the grind” season of David’s life. Possibly up to 15 years. Are you in the grind? Reference, Gregg: last week on suffering.

1 Samuel 24:1 After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, “David is in the Desert of En Gedi.” **2** So Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crag of the Wild Goats.

En Gedi) “spring-small goat” 4 quadrant slide of Engedi? (Dead Sea Scrolls & Masada)

It’s in this mountainous, rocky terrain that Saul unknowingly catches up to David. This encounter is jammed packed with humor, discomfort & lessons that apply to all of us.

3 He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave.

4 The men said, “This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’”

Then David crept up unnoticed...

Now, don’t read ahead. What will David do? (stay tuned, same bat time, bat channel)

Facets of this dilemma:

- Is this an opportunity or a temptation?
- Is this a situation of what you can do vs. what you should do?
- Is this a time to bow to human authority (societal structure) or overthrow?
- Is this a time for vengeance or grace?
- For David, is this his chance to grab what is rightfully his, or is it a time to let things roll?
- End or endure?

...and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.



5 Afterwards, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. 6 He said to his men, “The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD.”

David could have cut a throat, but instead he cuts a robe. What would you have done? (Volleyball spike?)

2 BASIC CHOICES: Seems to me like we encounter these types of situations more often than we realize. This cave encounter of David’s presents a typical dilemma for those of us attempting to follow Christ. Do we act now? Or, wait on the Lord to work it out? And we’re probably split in our perspective, but we really only have 2 basic choices:

1. SANCTIFIED HUMAN ACTION

Yes. God will provide for me – but expects me to participate in that plan, by sanctified, spirit filled, human action:

The Apostle Paul insists he must be tried by Caesar, in Acts, 23:11, 25:11

Acts 23: 11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”

(Paul, you’re going to Rome)

But later in Acts 25, some Jews attempt to have Paul tried not in Rome by Caesar, but in Jerusalem by Festus - and Paul insists:

Acts 25:11 If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no-one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!” 12 After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!”

The result of Paul fighting for his rights:

Philippians 1: 12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.



Paul's insistence on his rights allows him to be exactly where God told him to be, and the gospel to be propagated. It was God's will that he fight for his rights.

David had every right to take Saul's life here. And, then part of the Bible would read very differently. Do I need to point out that David took many people's lives thus far in his past – all justified and approved of by God?

2. WAIT ON THE LORD

I know that God has a plan for my life, down to the most specific details. God wants to work those details out completely, and we wait for him to do so. His own power. Any action I take will only mess it up. Keep my hands off. Let him supernaturally act for me.

Psalm 37:7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways,

David still believes in Saul, that he can change. Which in retrospect was wasted belief. The point is, keep believing, (Galatians 6:1) – until you just can't believe any longer, then believe a little more: (Matthew 18: 21) *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"* 22 *Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.*

Some of us are saying, "oh, that is so the right response." Others, "should have killed him."

Now, there's no question as to what the right answer is for this situation, but it does lend itself to bigger questions:

1. Is this always THE answer?
2. How can we trust that David made the right decision? What process was in place, experiences that give us confidence he was right? (Chapter 23) And, what can we learn from that?

How do we know what to do? The point of the study today. We learn from 1 Samuel 23.

DECIDING DILEMMAS:

1. Seek God about it.



23:1 When David was told, “Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are looting the threshing-floors,” **2 he enquired of the LORD**, saying, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?” The **LORD answered him**, “Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah.”

3 But David’s men said to him, “Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!” **4** Once again **David enquired of the LORD**, and the LORD answered him,

a. Pray. How do we know what to do? Get on our knees before God. Not just talk, but listen! How many mistakes could I have avoided if I’d just taken my time and sought God? (Firemen need to make quick decisions without time to collect all the facts)

Jas 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Isa 30:21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”

b. Spiritual discernment practices.

9 When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod.”

Ephod is a vest-like garment worn by the priest, particularly in seeking a decision from God. (We have the scripture, 2Pe 1:19 *And we have the word of the prophets made more certain*) Abiathar is the son of Ahimilech – priest slain by Saul for helping David.

c. Lifestyle of seeking God.

David was a seeker. He utilized a spiritual practice.
Seeking God=vertical. Next is horizontal.

2. Get counsel from a trusted friend.

1 Samuel 23:15 While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. **16** And Saul’s son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him to find strength in God. **17** “Don’t be afraid,” he said. “My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You shall be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this.” **18** The two of them made a covenant before the LORD.



Listening Hearts: combines the vertical with horizontal. Call. Discernment. Community.

3. Abandon yourself to a life of faith.

1 Samuel 23:26 Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them,

27 a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land." 28 Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines.

What? Can you imagine? What was this like for David to experience. The only way to experience it is to live it. David lived the life. Most people live their lives with the motivation of pain avoidance, very few with reward in mind.

10 Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands.

Listen to David's prayer during this time:

Psalms 54:1 When the Ziphites had gone to Saul and said, "Is not David hiding among us?" Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might. 2 Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth.

3 Strangers are attacking me; ruthless men seek my life--men without regard for God. Selah

4 Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.

Who was in control of David's life? God. Saul could not touch him if God wasn't going to allow it.

In Jesus' hand inside God's hand:

John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

David's decision is all about faith. Seeking God, because only in him are the answers. Allowing a friend to bolster that belief – because like all of us, his faith was weakening under the strain. About trusting God for the outcome; he had a chance to end it, instead he chooses to endure it. Even his words, said outloud are to buttress his faith, not so much a statement of his unwavering faith, but a reminder to himself – like Buechner says, "whistling in the dark."



Last week Gregg talked about a “theology of suffering.” That is, there is something to be believed about suffering. David, had this theology. He probably would not have labeled it theology, but he had it just the same. What he believed about his suffering was he could go to God with it, lay it at his feet, listening to God’s direction through it. He could go to his friend with it – whose words, in the time of greatest weakness, could strengthen him in his faith. That, his understanding was that no matter what the circumstance – that none of it could occur without the God of the universe’s knowledge – that in spite of it, the Lord (the one who is ultimately allowing it) is the one who can sustain him through it.

It was this understanding, that enabled him to not end it when he had the chance – that he could allow it to be extended, because his faith allowed him to endure it. He understood that, it’s only through fire that God can open up new opportunities and growth. Like a Sequoia, that needs fire to open up its cones to spread it’s seeds, so giants can grow.

We are saved by, and live by faith.

Ro 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

If we want to live the life, we have to live by faith.

1. Even though David did not take Saul’s life, he confronted him publicly.

1Samuel 24:7 With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way. **8** Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, “My lord the king!” When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. **9** He said to Saul, “Why do you listen when men say, ‘David is bent on harming you’? **10** This day you have seen with your own eyes how the LORD gave you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, ‘I will not lift my hand against my master, because he is the LORD’s anointed.’ **11** See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. Now understand and recognize that I am not guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. **12** 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. **13** As the old saying goes, ‘From evildoers come evil deeds,’ so my hand will not touch you. **14** “Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? **15** May the LORD be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand.” **16** When David finished saying this, Saul asked, “Is that your voice, David my son?”



2. We can't measure our action always by the outcome. (David really wasted this effort)

And he wept aloud. 17 "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. 18 You have just now told me of the good you did to me; the LORD gave me into your hands, but you did not kill me. 19 When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today. 20 I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. 21 Now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family." 22 So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

Saul makes no promises back. Manipulating the situation still. David is the one who makes a promise.

Faith over fear. There is only one thing worse than fear – regret.