



## Critical Issues for Men

([www.mensgroup.org](http://www.mensgroup.org) - "Original Study")

**PRAY:** Opening and Closing prayers are suggested for small group members or individuals to invite God into the study to seek Him in His Word. Feel free to add your own words in prayer.

*Dear Lord, as we embark on this journey to learn from the life of David, we come before you with open hearts and minds. Grant us wisdom to glean insights from his triumphs and challenges, and help us apply these lessons to our own lives. May we grow in faith, perseverance, and leadership, just as David did, and may your Holy Spirit guide us through this study. May the words we read and reflect upon deepen our relationship with you and strengthen our walk with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### INTRODUCTION: Lessons from David

As the shepherd of the family's sheep and goats and being the youngest of eight brothers, David was relegated to the fields and streams. He could not dream how God would use him in the future.

Samuel anointed him King of Israel fifteen years before Saul died in battle. David's ups are well known from his killing of Goliath, to his dancing in the streets as he welcomed the Ark of God into Jerusalem. But he also had some downs, from King Saul's assassination attempts on him, to living in Philistine territory and being responsible for six-hundred men and their families. Through it all, David was "a man after my [God's] own heart" (Acts 13:22).

David married seven women with Bathsheba being the last. He experienced the death of Bathsheba's first child, the murder of Amnon by his half-brother Absalom, and Absalom's death in the forest of Ephraim during his rebellion against him. The death of Jonathan, his best friend and Saul's son, the heir to the throne, also punctuated his sorrow.

Anointed King in his teens, he did not become the actual King until thirty years of age. Then he reigned for forty years. David experienced a full life. He chronicled his relationship with God through the many psalms he penned which expressed his joys and struggles in his rise from shepherd to King.

We could assume because he lived his life nine centuries before the time of Christ, in an agrarian society, that lessons from him would be irrelevant to the hustle and bustle of our lives

today. However, the lessons learned from the crucial life issues he faced apply to men of every century.

This series reviews critical issues for men from a man who loved God and lived that out daily. We trust you will find each one a soul-searching experience with much benefit in your journey ahead with God.

## Lesson 1 – Success

**DESCRIPTION:** Success is a critical issue for a man, unless he has already given up. In this lesson we will focus on what is real and lasting success and discuss business / professional success and its spiritual relevance.

“Blessings on each man who considers the outcome of this lesson, for to understand what real success is can open your life to new possibilities.” -- C. Marsh Bull

**STARTING PRAYER:** *Lord, we ask that you open our minds beyond our circumstances to a new understanding of what is real success. Guide us to truths that will enhance and strengthen our life and direct us forward in action that will match up with these truths.*

### OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. How is success measured in our culture?

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2. In what ways have you accomplished success?

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### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:

*David said to Saul, Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him. Saul replied, You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth. But David said to Saul, Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of the Philistine (1 Samuel 17:32-37).*

### LESSON:

David's father told him to take food to his three brothers who were a part of the Israelite army fighting against the Philistines. When David arrived, Goliath, a Philistine champion, was already in the valley between the two armies offering to fight any Israelite soldier, and whoever lost would sentence their nation to slavery under the other. Why cause much death among both armies when we could settle this through one fight between two warriors?

Goliath was a physical brute at nearly ten-feet tall. His armor was huge, as was his spear. He was confident that he could be successful in battle due to his rigorous preparation, physical strength, and offensive abilities. He offered this same challenge for forty days, morning and evening, but no Israelite soldier stepped forward. As they listened to him each day, they became discouraged and fearful because they only considered his size. They were defeated in their hearts by their own fear.

When David volunteered to kill Goliath, King Saul saw him as a child who was weak, boastful, inexperienced, and unequipped. He went so far as to offer his own armor to David but he refused it, saying he was not used to it (1 Samuel 17:39). But David was still resolute.

Here we see two different illustrations of success. The intimidating physical status that Goliath presented, and David's internal belief, fostered by previous experiences of killing a lion and bear, and his understanding of God based on his growing relationship with Him.

Personal success is defined as you achieving forward progress. It is evaluated based on you, not on how you do in comparison with others. It is not measured by who you are, but by what you are compared to what you could be. It is not a matter of achieving certain right things, for those things could be different for each person, but is a matter of being the right person.

Good examples of this are illustrated by how God saw Israel and individuals in Scripture:

- Gideon was threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, *The Lord is with you, mighty warrior* (Judges 6:12). God saw him different than he saw himself.
- Samuel said to Saul at his anointing as a king, *Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king of Israel* (1 Samuel 15:17). Consider God's viewpoint as valid.
- Peter's name was changed by Jesus when he said, *You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas or Peter* (John 1:42). From the word, petros, which means rock.
- Gabriel spoke to Mary, Jesus' mother, saying, *Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you* (Luke 1:28). You're not just a teenage mother to be, you are special to God.
- Ananias was told by God to go to Saul when He said, *Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel* (Acts 9:15). In other words, ignore the way you see Saul now, I see him differently.

Christians seem to be divided, supposing that success and spirituality are not compatible. These supposed irreconcilable differences cause concern for many men who want to succeed but also want to be spiritual. So, can a Christian be successful in business and still maintain his growing spirituality?

There are three different views of success which come out of our SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:

1. The common man, Goliath in the passage, views success as overcoming another through brute strength, emotional hardness, and mental acuity. He is self-confident and protective of his own welfare.

2. The Christian man who believes in success as unattainable because of the fear that he will lose his spirituality if he is successful. He is like the soldiers showing up for battle each day, seeing the successful Goliath and retreating out of fear.
3. The victorious Christian man exemplified by David. He may be immature, inexperienced, and unequipped but knows God encourages success no matter what your age, what you have experienced and how many burdens you bear. God is near to him, has been with him in past struggles, and is confident he can be successful.

Scripture indicates that God desires success for every believer, not based on his lot in life, but based on his success through God's help. He invites God into every event and submits his whole life to His control.

Paul summed it up well in his writing to the Galatian Christians when he said, *Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load* (Galatians 6:4-5).

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What was the basis of David's success?

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2. Which of the three views is your understanding of success?

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3. What are your thoughts concerning adjusting your view of success?

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**APPLICATION:**

1. Thinking of your personal experience, when have you accepted the defeated Christian's view of success?

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2. What would you need to do to trust God for your successes?

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3. What would be your first action taken to live this way?

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**CLOSING PRAYER:**

*Lord, we have lived too long with an improper view of success and we want to change our perspective. We pray that you will be at the center of our success and that we will humbly respect your place in our life.*

**Suggested Additional Resources:**

- Lauren Daigle’s sings a powerful song entitled, *You Say*, which focuses our thoughts not on ourselves but on God’s view of us. This helps us to keep the creep of doubt at bay in our lives. Find it on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/slaT8Jl2zpl> and play it for the group.

## Lesson 2 – Close Friendships

**DESCRIPTION:** We will challenge men with building close friendships with other men.

“Blessings on each man who will seriously consider the friendships he now has and the friendships that will help him move forward spiritually in his life.” -- C. Marsh Bull

**STARTING PRAYER:** *Father, You are our friend that sticks closer than a brother, and we want to have friends that honor all You have done for us. Help us to consider the following elements to the building of friendships that will last and uplift each other.*

### OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. Talk about a person with which you have built a friendship in the past?

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2. What special came of that friendship?

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**Admiration Passage:** *After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself...Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow, and his belt (1 Samuel 18:1, 4).*

**Admiration:** Jonathan gave signs of admiration to David after Goliath’s death. He gave him his robe, tunic, sword, bow and belt. His robe was a sign of his position in the kingdom as son of the king, a link to royalty and distinction. David’s clothing would have been drenched in the blood of Goliath and Jonathan’s robe was unspotted. He treated David with this as a sign of equality of position. The tunic was a special undergarment for protection, but he was willing to give it to David to help keep him safe. His sword and bow were his offensive weapons and suggested agility, strength, and readiness. All were gifts from Jonathan to David because of his respect for him.

**Loyalty Passage:** *Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly...Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason? (1 Samuel 19:4, 5b).*

**Loyalty:** Jonathan was loyal to his friend David, even when his own father was seeking to kill him. Jonathan reasoned with his father, the king, related to the good David had done for him. He put his own life on the line to protect David from false statements and assumptions made about him.

**Honesty Passage:** *Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to kill me? Never! Jonathan replied. You are not going to die!...But David took an oath and said to Jonathan, Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes...Yet as surely as the Lord lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death (1 Samuel 20:1-3).*

**Honesty:** David and Jonathan had a relationship where they trusted the honesty of the other. They used each other as a sounding board to hear their own words, identify blind spots, and express their own feelings freely. Honesty led both to secure a plan that would reveal the truth about King Saul’s feelings concerning David. Nothing was unsaid and each could be trusted.

**Encouragement Passage:** *Saul’s son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. Don’t be afraid, he said. My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this. (1 Samuel 23:16-17).*

**Encouragement:** There were ups and downs in their lives influenced by the circumstances that surrounded them. Jonathan encouraged David when he was afraid and had lost his strength. He said he did not want the kingdom and that David was sure to become the next king of Israel. This comfort made David hold on to the dream placed in him when anointed by Samuel.

Admiration leads to loyalty and a deepening of friendship. Loyalty leads to honesty so essential to take one step deeper in the relationship. It was also recognized by both men that encouragement in the hard times would be necessary to keep the relationship strong.

Admiration, loyalty, honesty and encouragement help in the process of friendship development. Too often we miss these or they are abused in friendships which leads to lack of trust and the breakdown of friendship. It all fits into the framework of what is called accountability. See the suggested additional resources below.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. How do you treat your close friends, as an equal, willing to give what you own to them, if necessary?

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2. What struck you about David and Jonathan’s friendship?

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3. What are your thoughts concerning Jonathan's gifts, honesty, and loyalty to David?

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**APPLICATION:**

1. Who do you know that you would like to build a closer friendship to?

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2. How would you show admiration, loyalty, honesty and encouragement to them?

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3. Which of these four areas would be the hardest for you to develop?

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**CLOSING PRAYER:**

*Father, as men we tend to keep to ourselves and shy away from deeper friendships with other men to be loyal to, honest with, and who could encourage us. Help us to remove the barriers in our mind so that we can build friendships that make us stronger and more spiritual.*

**Suggested Additional Resources:**

- On the [mensgroup.org](https://www.mensgroup.org) website, under "Free Bible Studies -> Extended Studies" there is a 4-lesson study on Accountability. It is easy to go through and helpful in finding a person to help you with accountability. Take a look: <https://www.mensgroup.org/accountability-study>

### Lesson 3 – Morality

**DESCRIPTION:** We will challenge each man to face his need for morality, rather than face the consequences of immoral decisions that can hurt today and haunt tomorrow.

“Blessings on each man who will seriously consider his moral standing and the cracks in his armor.” -- C. Marsh Bull

**STARTING PRAYER:** *Lord, we know this is a somewhat foggy area for men as they sort through their morality related to God, family, friends, and business. We know that many feel like a ship in a storm-tossed sea when dealing with moral choices. Help us all as we consider morality that is in keeping with your Word.*

**OPENING QUESTIONS:**

1. What are some of the moral issues you face as a man?

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2. What are most often the consequences of moral failure?

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**SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:**

*One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, she is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.*

*Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, I am pregnant.*

*So David sent this word to Joab: Send me Uriah the Hittite....When Uriah came to him, David asked him how...the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, Go down to your house and wash your feet....But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master’s servants.*

*David was told, Uriah did not go home. So he asked Uriah, Haven’t you just come from a military campaign? Why didn’t you go home? Uriah said to David, The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord’s men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!*

*Then David said to him, Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back. At David’s invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master’s servants; he did not go home.*

*In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah...So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were...some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died.*

*Joab sent David a full account of the battle...through a messenger. When he finished...David told the messenger, Say this to Joab: Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.*

*When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD (2 Samuel 11:2-27).*

**LESSON:**

This well-known story gives us the backdrop as well as the acts orchestrated by David. It is a story of lust, deceit, and bad decisions that tainted the moral life of David.

In order to discuss it, we must establish an understanding of morality. Man's view of morality is that it can change over time, based on the culture, community, and other variables. But the view of morality from God's perspective is that it is based in His nature and anchored in His Word. It is tied to loving God and loving people. In the Bible we see those who followed God and gleaned from His Word morality and lived wisely, and we also see people that forsook God, acted immorally, and suffered the negative consequences.

Back to our text. Bathsheba does give birth to the child of this affair but he dies shortly after. David is besought by guilt and shame for what he has done to one of the thirty best men in his army. At this time, David was fifty years old, had seven wives and other wives he married when he moved to Jerusalem to be King of all Israel. In this story, David did not go to war with the army because Joab was handling it as a small war against the Ammonites.

We are told, *David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord and had not failed to keep any of the Lord's commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite (1 Kings 15:5).* His sins included adultery with his wife Bathsheba, David's attempts to cover it up, and the murder of Uriah by putting him in the heat of the battle where he could be killed more readily, which is exactly what happened.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. This one adulterous night led to moral choices to cover it up rather than confess it. Review them.

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2. What were the consequences for David and Bathsheba because of this choice?

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3. What could David have done to prevent all that happened?

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**APPLICATION:**

1. What moral issues are the most difficult for you?

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2. What would help strengthen you against a failure in the area of morality?

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3. What are consequences you can see with immorality?

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**CLOSING PRAYER:**

*Lord, we are able to mess up our lives with one immoral action. Help us to consider this when we are tempted to waiver in our commitment. We want to be loyal to you and that means we must be loyal to ourself, our family, our church, and our business activities.*

## Lesson 4 – Disappointment

**DESCRIPTION:** We will use a disappointment in the life of David to help us face our own disappointments better.

“Blessings on each man who will consider a different option to disappointment than just sadness and disbelief. Help us to turn it around to faith.” -- C. Marsh Bull

**STARTING PRAYER:** *Lord, you are gracious to us and yet we do have disappointments in our lives. Help us to view them from a heavenly perspective and trust that you are always working for our good. Clarify that for us today in this lesson.*

### OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. Share a time in your life when you were disappointed.

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2. What did you learn from that experience?

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### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:

*David and the six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish son of Maok king of Gath. David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal.*

*Then David said to Achish, If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you? So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag...David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months (1 Samuel 27:2-3, 5-7).*

*In those days the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, You must understand that you and your men will accompany me in the army. David said, Then you will see for yourself what your servant can do (1 Samuel 28:1-2a).*

*The Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, and Israel camped by the spring in Jezreel. As the Philistine rulers marched with their units of hundreds and thousands, David and his men were marching at the rear with Achish. The commanders of the Philistines asked, What about these Hebrews? Achish replied, Is this not David, who was an officer of Saul king of Israel? He has already been with me for over a year, and from the day he left Saul until now, I have found no fault in him.*

*But the Philistine commanders were angry with Achish and said, Send the man back, that he may return to the place you assigned him. He must not go with us into battle, or he will turn against us during the fighting. How better could he regain his master's favor than by taking the heads of our own men?*

*So Achish called David and said to him, As surely as the LORD lives, you have been reliable, and I would be pleased to have you serve with me in the army. From the day you came to me until today, I have found no fault in you, but the rulers don't approve of you. Now turn back and go in peace; do nothing to displease the Philistine rulers.*

*But what have I done? asked David. What have you found against your servant from the day I came to you until now? Why can't I go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?*

*Achish answered, I know that you have been as pleasing in my eyes as an angel of God; nevertheless, the Philistine commanders have said, He must not go up with us into battle.*

*Now get up early, along with your master's servants who have come with you, and leave in the morning as soon as it is light. So David and his men got up early in the morning to go back to the land of the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to Jezreel (1 Samuel 29:1-11)*

*David and his men reached Ziklag on the third day. Now the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned it, and had taken captive the women and everyone else in it, both young and old. They killed none of them, but carried them off as they went on their way.*

*When David and his men reached Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. David's two wives had been captured—Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God.*

*Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelek, Bring me the ephod. Abiathar brought it to him, and David inquired of the LORD, Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them? Pursue them, he answered. You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue.*

*They found an Egyptian in a field and brought him to David. David asked him, Who do you belong to? Where do you come from? He said, I am an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite. My master abandoned me when I became ill three days ago.<sup>14</sup> We raided the Negev of the Kerethites, some territory belonging to Judah and the Negev of Caleb. And we burned Ziklag. David asked him, "Can you lead me down to this raiding party?"*

*He answered, Swear to me before God that you will not kill me or hand me over to my master, and I will take you down to them. He led David down, and there they were, scattered over the countryside, eating, drinking and reveling because of the great amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from Judah. David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day, and none of them got away, except four hundred young men who rode off on camels and fled. David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back. He took all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock, saying, This is David's plunder (1 Samuel 30:1-30).*

**LESSON:**

Tired of running from King Saul, David finally realized he would be in continual danger until he got out of Israel. So, he moved to Philistine territory and became a friend of King Achish of Gath. He requested of the king another place to live with his 600 men and their families so the king gave him the town of Ziklag.

He continued to go out, but raided Philistine instead of Israelite villages. However, no one was ever left to bring the bad news to King Achish that it was David’s men. At the same time, King Achish was convinced of David’s loyalty and he treated him well.

As the Philistine Kings prepared a large offensive to strike Israel, David joined their ranks. Complaints were lodged by the other Philistine Kings to King Achish concerned including David in the war. King Achish went to his defense, but the kings won out and David was told to return to Ziklag.

That was disappointing to David but he obeyed the King’s command and traveled back to Ziklag only to find it in ruins and all their treasure and families taken captive. David again was disappointed and was losing face before his men, so he decided to go after the raiders. Upon catching up to them, they caught them off guard, won the battle, and restored to the men their families and treasure.

Here was where the disappointment disappeared. If David had taken the side of the Philistine Kings, he and his men would have been present when King Saul, Jonathan, and his two other sons were killed. How would he have explained that to the tribes of Israel? Seemingly, it would be looked at as betrayal by David and his men and certainly impact his ability to become the new king of Israel and his men live again in Israel territory safely.

Consider a disappointment you experience as evidence of God’s movement in your life. God can be protecting you from making a worse mistake, or providing you focus on what really is important, or paving the way for a future success. Considered your disappointment as a good thing, rather than something to get frustrated or angry about.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What was David’s motivation for moving into Philistine territory?

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2. How did David’s obedience in returning to Ziklag as ordered by King Achish become a blessing?

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3. What are other thoughts on disappointment that you find helpful?

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**APPLICATION:**

1. Share a personal experience when have you experienced a heart-felt disappointment?

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2. What was your initial response and what happened in the end?

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3. What would it take for you to consider disappointment a good thing?

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**CLOSING PRAYER:**

*Lord, we are often challenged with a disappointment in life. From looking at this experience of David, we can see that his obedience led him to be where God wanted him. Help us to be affirmed in our disappointment that you are ever with us in the hard as well as the good times.*



## Lesson 5 – Aloneness

**DESCRIPTION:** Our objective is to bring to the surface feelings of aloneness that men experience and to help them better understand them and deal with them.

“Blessing on each of you who will better understand your own aloneness and continue to be confident in God.” -- C. Marsh Bull

**STARTING PRAYER:** *Father, we know that you are always by our side, that you will never leave us nor forsake us. However, we feel alone sometimes. Help us to understand where aloneness comes from and how we can deal with it.*

### OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. When have you felt alone?

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2. How long did it continue?

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### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:

*I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy. I pour out before him my complaint; before him I tell my trouble. When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who watch over my way. In the path where I walk people have hidden a snare for me. Look and see, there is no one at my right hand; no one is concerned for me.*

*I have no refuge; no one cares for my life. I cry to you, LORD; I say, You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me. Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me (Psalm 142).*

### LESSON:

After David’s successful encounter with Goliath and his developing friendship with Jonathan, King Saul’s son, there came a time when King Saul became convinced that David was trying to take his throne. Saul sent out scouts to search for David and even local people betrayed David’s position to the king.

David moves deeper into wilderness areas with his six-hundred-man fighting force. If not for occasional help from supporters, this rag-tag army would go hungry. Even in the good times of meals, David feels alone and discouraged. He is responsible for a large and loyal army and that pressure, plus the promise

of kingship in the past given by God through Samuel, led him to wonder about his future. He desired rescue and felt in desperate need of protection from God.

David went to God and poured out his complaint, all the trouble he was in. His spirit grew faint, he must watch for snares, he felt no one was concerned for him. There was no refuge where he was safe, he must move continuously to avoid detection.

For David, on top of the burden of lost relationships with family and friends, he must hide out in places large enough to protect his men and himself and at the same time be safe from the eyes of King Saul's scouts. This psalm is identified as the time when he was in the cave of Adullam.

Those attracted to David while he was in this pain were his brothers and his father's household and all sorts of men who were distressed, debt-ridden, and discontented. This would not be an easy group to please. However, David did not allow their situations to affect him negatively. He responded by finding protection for his family with the King of Moab so that he didn't have to worry about them (1 Samuel 22:3-4). He kept on defeating the enemies of Israel, the Philistines, giving those around him a new sense of victory and enthusiasm (23:2-13). David kept his view outward, as much as possible.

He admits his need and calls out to God (Psalm 57:1-5). He has a teachable spirit as he reflects on his understanding of God. He is the one who watches over him. He is the one who is his refuge and it is God who can set him free. And what does God do? He responds by sending a messenger to King Saul as he rides to intercept David which causes him to cut off the chase and return to fight marauding Philistines (1 Samuel 22:26-28).

God helps David with his feelings of aloneness by keeping his army focused on important battles to protect Israel. David personalizes God's goodness to him and resets his mind to believe that God will take care of what he needs. He believes.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. How much of what is transpiring in David's life is his fault?

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2. When have you been as honest as David was in Psalm 142:1-4?

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3. What further thoughts do you have concerning this Psalm?

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**APPLICATION:**

1. Thinking of your personal experiences of aloneness, how often did you end up praising God in them?

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2. What would it take for you to be more like David and less like yourself?

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3. How will you integrate this story into your life during alone times?

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**CLOSING PRAYER:**

*Father, we go through periods of dryness in our lives. We feel alone and discouraged. But we must come to you for strength and solace for our inner being. We must trust you when it is dark and we must praise you like Paul and Silas did in prison. Help us out of our aloneness but focusing on you and not ourselves.*

**Suggested Additional Resources:**

David Crowder, along with three others, wrote and performed a powerful song that encourages us in our aloneness entitled, *God Really Loves Us*. Find it on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/yG-Y9bWICw8> and play it for the group.

## Lesson 6 – Devotion to God

**DESCRIPTION:** Our devotion to God should supersede any relationship we have on Earth. We will discuss David’s loyalty to God, his continued dependence on God, and his integrity.

“Blessings on each man who will seriously consider the state of his heart, the level of his dependence on God, and his own integrity” -- C. Marsh Bull

**STARTING PRAYER:** *God, we know that there are serious issues to talk about when we consider our relationship to you. Help us to acknowledge our dependence on you and make it a heart issue every day.*

### OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. How do you view your relationship with God?

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2. How has that relationship helped you?

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### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:

God speaking to Saul said, *But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man [David] after his own heart* (1 Samuel 13:14). Later, in retrospect to Solomon’s life, the writer of Kings said, *As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been* (1 Kings 11:4). The book of Kings also reveals that Jeroboam’s wife went to the prophet Ahijah and he gave her a message for King Jeroboam, *...You have not been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes* (1 Kings 14:8).

### LESSON:

We have looked at the morality of David in a previous lesson, so the question is, how can God view David as loyal to Him when there was sin in his life? God was forgiving and had all the time an inside view of David’s heart. Three features of his heart revealed his inner life.

First, David was a humble person. Having been anointed by Samuel while being the last and youngest of his father’s children, David was called by God, but not yet chosen by Israel, to be their king. He was a teenager when anointed but did not become king until he was thirty years old. However, he knew this is what God wanted for him. He waited patiently, finding victory before him in small ways, like killing a bear and a lion that were menacing the sheep. He considered God as the one protecting him and defeating forces that came against him.

All of this was the result of an inner heart that was submitted to God. Humility is not something you can fake. Ego shows up without you being aware. Humility only happens when you are constantly aware of your frail humanity and in awe of God's divinity and all that that implies.

Second, David's spirituality. He knew that the Holy Spirit was upon him from the point of his anointing. At one point, after the Bathsheba and Uriah incident, David asked that the Spirit not be taken from him (Psalm 51:1-15). He recognized that his attention to confession and repentance was essential to help him and that it would also help others around him.

He also knew that he had to depend on God even when he faced insurmountable odds. During his confrontation with the giant Goliath, he declared that he came against him in the name of the Lord Almighty (1 Samuel 17:45). In another instance David heard that the Philistines were stealing grain from the stores at Keilah. He inquired of the Lord if he should battle them. He was assured that it was God's will to do that (1 Samuel 23:2-4). David inquired of the Lord often.

David also had to deal with disappointment spiritually. God told him that he could not build the Temple, which was a deep desire of his, because of the blood on his hands from war. David didn't respond negatively to this, instead he expressed his confidence in God and sacrificed praise to Him (2 Samuel 7:5-29).

In our lives when we become a believer, the Holy Spirit comes into our heart and begins His work of conforming us to the image of Christ. He will never leave us nor forsake us, so we can have the confidence to live life on God's terms, not ours. David's dependence on Him in living a life inside His will was important. We must place everything on the altar and believe that He will always do what is necessary for us to grow in our faith.

Third, David had integrity. He respected King Saul's authority even though he tried to kill David on several occasions (1 Samuel 24 & 26). He kept his word to Jonathan concerning caring for his family after he died. No one was around when David and Jonathan pledged their lives to each other. So, when Jonathan died, he could have decided not to ignore that pledge, but he held to his promise (1 Samuel 20:14-15). It was fulfilled in 2 Samuel 21:5-7.

David's humility, spirituality, and integrity were essential elements of his life as they should be ours. Hanani, a seer, confronted King Asa with the reality of his trust in men rather than God. In that discussion he said, *The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him* (2 Chronicles 16:9).

This is where we should be and God has provided the following resources to aid in our fully committed state:

- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit
- A new nature provided for us at our salvation
- Giftings of the Spirit to help the church fulfill its mission
- Spiritual illumination of the words written in the Bible
- Christian friends to help us carry burdens
- Christian leadership (pastors, elders, and deacons) to keep us focused

God has not left us, neither has He required us to do something that is impossible. He is there for us. He has prepared the way. Consider your level of devotion to Him.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What is David's example to you?

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2. What struck you about God's loyalty here?

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3. What are your thoughts concerning a committed life?

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**APPLICATION:**

1. Thinking about your humility, spirituality, and integrity, which one is hardest for you to embrace?

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2. What is one step that you could take to enhance the level of each of the three?

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3. How do you assess the gifts to you from God which can help in your Christian life?

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**CLOSING PRAYER:**

*God, our humility, spirituality, and integrity are assaulted every day, but you have given us many helps to remain devoted to you. Guide us to wholehearted commitment that strengthens us to persevere through the trials and joys of our life.*

**Suggested Additional Resources:**

- Knowing more about the three persons of the Trinity: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit, can lead you to more commitment. Seek out studies that focus on each one.

This concludes our “Critical Issues for Men” extended study.

All our Blessings,

Men’s Group Foundation, Inc.

A mensgroup.org “Third Party Original Study”

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