**Week One – February 17/18 – I Samuel 23-24**

**Introduction**

In chapters 23 and 24 we will see David in continuous danger, tested to hold fast to his faith in God’s promises. **What times in your own life can you look back on as key moments in relying on God’s guidance?** Keep this in mind as we focus tonight on how David’s continuous and intentional relationship with God guides him through the dangers to come.

**Read I Samuel 23:1-5**

(v.1-2) A constant throughout I Samuel has been David’s faith in God to deliver him from his enemies. David has come to such an understanding of the Lord’s strength that it seems as if sometimes he has no fear. In these verses we see him immediately inquire of the Lord regarding Keilah, and the Lord responds affirming that David and his troops should go fight the Philistines and save Keilah.

* **Why do we fail often to quickly consult God in our discernment?**
* **How often do we ask before we act?**
* **What fears has God already delivered you from?**

(v.3-4) The first answer from God pointing David to go save Keilah seems to be more than enough for David. His faith in God made it unnecessary in his mind to ask God a follow-up question. However, there is fear and uncertainty lingering amongst David’s troops, and this causes them to shy away from God’s plan. David then inquired of the Lord again in which God responds and tells him that he will give the Philistines into the hand of Israel. God in his mercy here gives David’s troops confidence, responding to their question in verse 3.

* **How do we defend against letting the fear and uncertainty in our lives prevent us from going back to God for guidance?**
* **What can be said of the character of God in his answering of David’s questions?** *(He is patient, willing to answer the questions that arise from doubt)*

(v.5) - The troops of Israel who have now given over their doubts and fears to the Lord, defeat the Philistines and save the inhabitants of Keilah by the power of God.

* **What prevents us from taking action even when we understand God’s word?**

**Read I Samuel 23:6-14**

(v.6) - Abiathar, a priest and the son of Ahimelech, provides the ephod with which David is able to ask and receive such clear guidance throughout this chapter.

* **When you pray and ask the Lord for guidance, do you sometimes fail to value what he teaches you while you wait for an answer? What has God taught you in your waiting?**

(v.7-8) Saul learns David is in Keilah, seeing it as a perfect opportunity to attack, even going as far to say “God has given him into my hand…”

* **What are indicators that Saul continually places own will above God’s will?**
* **What is revealed about our trust in God when we put our will above his?**
* **What parts of your life are you still hesitant to surrender to God?**

(v.9-12) Verses 9-12 probably give us as close a look at God’s use of the ephod as we will ever get. David has direct divine access to God through the priest Abiathar and is able to use his ephod to communicate clearly with God. God informs David that Saul will come after him, and that Keilah will surrender David into Saul’s hands. The ephod allowed David the opportunity to communicate with God. Today Jesus’ role as our high priest grants us access to him.

**Read Hebrews 4:14-16, where we see the privilege of divine access through Christ. What are the most beautiful or encouraging aspects of Jesus’ role as Great High Priest expressed in these verses? It is clear what we are able to receive as we approach the throne - grace and mercy. Do you think most people would rather approach God with confidence to know what they want to know or get what they want to get? Why is that?**

(v.13-14) David and his troops flee to….. wherever they could go. Being chased by a jealous, power-hungry king, they fled with no destination in mind, arriving in the wilderness of Ziph. **What is revealed about God’s character in the last part of verse 14?**

**Read I Samuel 23:15-29**

(v.15-18) Although Saul is not having any luck pursuing David, it's no coincidence that his son is able to. Jonathan made his way through the wilderness of Ziph carrying powerful encouragement that David needed to hear. His presence was probably of much comfort to David, but his reminder to David that he would be king of Israel would have the lasting effect.

* **How much do you owe to encouragers, people like Jonathan, who have helped you in your walk of faith? Who were they and what effect did they have on you?**

(v.25-29) The Lord provides an escape for David when Saul is surrounding him on either side of the mountain, showing that he can protect David in a multitude of ways.

* **This “escape” that the Lord provides can either be seen as a unique part of God’s providential plan to protect David, or as ironic coincidence. How does this remind us of how important understanding the sovereignty of God is in our lives?**

**Read I Samuel 24:1-7**

(v.1-7) When David is given the perfect opportunity to strike down Saul, and his men are encouraging him to kill him, David only cuts off the corner of Saul’s robe because he will not kill the Lord’s anointed. Although the spirit of the Lord had already left Saul, David still sees Saul as the anointed king of Israel and the one on the throne. David suppresses his warrior instinct and leans on God’s timing. **Reflect on the situations David has been in for the past couple of chapters. After considering all the things that Saul has done to him, what does this act of David say about his heart for God?**

**Read I Samuel 24:8-15**

(v.8-10) David calls out to Saul and in humility pleads his innocence. He bows his face to the Earth to the one who had been trying to kill him out of jealousy. David then says to Saul that the Lord had even given him into his hand. It is here that he recognizes that God gave Saul into his hands not as an opportunity to kill, but as an opportunity to test him in trusting God’s timing.

* **You may have some situation in your own experience where you need confidence that the Lord is a God of justice. What makes it so hard to wait confidently for this without taking matters into your own hands?**

(v.11-15) David continues to speak to Saul about his innocence, and he eventually says, “May the Lord therefore be the judge and give sentence between me and you…” This is extremely important because David does not place his security in any change of heart from Saul, rather he casts his case upon God. **What is it about resolving conflict that makes it so difficult? How do we go about handling conflict with Christlikeness?**

**Read I Samuel 24:16-22**

(v.16-22) Saul acknowledges that David is more righteous than him and understands how David could have easily killed him. Saul knows that David will be the King of Israel and that leadership of the kingdom will be placed in his hands. Saul pleads with David not to cut off his family line. **What does the end of Saul’s response to David reveal about his true thoughts?**

**Conclusion:** In God’s guidance through our troubles, we have received access to him, encouragement through him, and God’s ability to use trials to grow our faith and trust. **Get into triads and pray over one another to lean into God’s faithfulness and to trust Him with the direction for our lives.**