

Episode: Other Letters Series No. 04

Narrator: David

Primary Scriptures: 1 Samuel 29, 30

Story Summary: David learning lessons before he becomes king

Location: Israel

Time: circa 1000 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 1 Samuel 30:6, 30:24-25

What is the biggest difference between Saul and David? Many might answer David was a man after God's own heart, while Saul wasn't. Others might answer Saul was deranged while David wasn't. Here is another take: Saul was anointed king and thrown into the job without any training or teaching; David spent decades learning how to make good choices and had God as his teacher.

David spent his youth as a shepherd learning how to manage and care for difficult, thankless animals. He learned how to protect his sheep with a sling and staff, the weapons he took to kill Goliath.

David spent time in the courts of the king and in the army. He watched as Saul led his country and his men. By watching Saul, David learned lessons in what to do and what not to do. When he was banished from the court, he lived as an outlaw for many years. He learned the ways of the Philistines, how to lead a motley crew of hundreds of men, and how to depend on God.

As David's career as an outlaw was drawing to a close, he found himself as a commander of the Philistine army on the way to fight (and kill) King Saul. He found himself in a terrible position of fighting to kill God's anointed king, while his personal aim had been never to harm God's anointed king. Fortunately, the other Philistine commanders were adamant about David not being included in the battle, so he was sent to his town, Ziklag.

Arriving at Ziklag, he and his men found the dreaded Amalekites had destroyed the town, kidnapped all the people, and looted their belongings. Barely avoiding a coup, David led his men in chasing, finding and defeating the Amalekites. In the chase, two hundred of David's men were so fatigued they could not continue and stayed with the supplies, but the other four hundred continued.

When it came time to split the plunder, the four hundred did not want to share with the two hundred. David's response was that it was the Lord's victory, so they should split equally. That wise response became a law of Israel.

David's decision was seemingly about splitting plunder, but it was really about taking the Lord's victory as their own was an evil thing to do. It was through that decision David crossed a threshold of understanding a new definition of evil.