

LESSON 6

SAUL'S ENVY ERUPTS

(READ 1 SAMUEL 20-24)



Introduction

As the relationship between Jonathan and David grew stronger, so did Saul's envy of David. By His grace, God created a special relationship between Jonathan and David. The Bible put their friendship in these terms, "Then Jonathan made a covenant with David" (1 Samuel 18:3). Samuel notes some of the specifics of this friendship, including that Jonathan knew that David would succeed Saul as king. The giving of his robe, armor, and military hardware signified Jonathan's servitude to David (1 Samuel 18:4).

We know from early verses that Jonathan, like David, was a man of God. In contrast to his father, Jonathan submitted his will to God in faithful and loving obedience to God's blessing. No hatred or envy came from Jonathan, only love. Statistics today show that Americans have a third fewer close friends than twenty years ago. While the story of Jonathan and David provides insight into true friendship, Americans seem content to live lonelier, more isolated lives—like Saul.

Did Jonathan's friendship with David suffer through adversity? Yes! It was adversity that formed in Saul's envy. "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity," David's son Solomon wrote (Proverbs 17:17). David must have told Solomon about his friendship with Jonathan. He must have told him that God wants us to honor Him by keeping His commandments not to envy or covet anything that belongs to our neighbor. Envy robs us of our ability to love. As the anonymous poet wrote, it slays us with our own arrows.

Attempted Murder

"Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7). How those words angered Saul! Saul's mind must have replayed them repeatedly. One day Saul's anger erupted as he "sat in his house with his spear in his hand" (1 Samuel 19:9). In envy-induced insanity, Saul hurled his spear at David. That was the last occasion David ever stood in Saul's palace. When David left, he took refuge with Samuel in Ramah (1 Samuel 19:18). God's hand guided the youthful future king. The Lord of history knew Saul's murderous intent. Nothing, however, would deter God's plan to make an eternal kingdom through David's lineage. His descendant—Jesus Christ—would die for the sins of the world, one life in exchange for many.

70. What does friendship mean to you?
71. In your opinion, what makes friendships grow?
72. How did Jonathan exemplify true friendship?



David and Jonathan

Read 1 Samuel 20:1–22:5. David and Jonathan’s relationship grew under adversity. Jonathan found himself in an awkward situation, caught between honoring his father and saving his friend’s life.

- 73.** Perhaps you are familiar with the expression “Put the best construction on everything.” How did Jonathan live out this expression?
- 74.** Saul’s anger erupted against Jonathan because of his friendship with David. In what way did Jonathan respect his father while protecting David from his father’s anger?
- 75.** After the Philistines stormed Shiloh and stole the ark, the Lord’s priests moved to the city of Nob, some two miles northeast of Jerusalem. David sought asylum there. What two items did David receive from the priests at Nob?
- A.** 1 Samuel 21:6—
- B.** 1 Samuel 21:8–9—

Saul Murders God’s Priests

Read 1 Samuel 22:6–23. Saul pursued David to Nob and ordered the death of God’s priests. He also “put to the sword” all living things in the city.

- 76.** Verse 20 discloses the name of a lone survivor of this massacre. Who was this man? What happened to him (2 Samuel 8:15–17)?

David Saves Keilah

Read 1 Samuel 23. Even with Saul’s murderous horde following him, David paused to aid a city attacked by the Philistines. Note David’s actions. Several times David stopped to inquire of the Lord.

- 77.** Think back to Saul’s action regarding his unfaithful sacrifice. How did David’s actions stand in contrast to Saul’s?
- 78.** What assurances of victory did God offer David? Had you been David, how would you have felt after hearing God’s words in verses 4, 11, and 12?
- 79.** David was also blessed with a visit from Jonathan, his dear friend. What evidence can you find that proves that David may have needed reassuring? What words of reassurance did Jonathan bring?

David Spares Saul’s Life

Read 1 Samuel 24. David found himself in an awkward situation. While hiding from Saul in a cave, David had an opportunity to take Saul’s life. Instead of killing Saul, David only “cut off a corner” of Saul’s robe.

- 80.** How did David’s actions demonstrate a respect for God’s chosen king—even though David knew that he would one day succeed him?
- 81.** If presented with an opportunity such as this, what would you have done?



God's Word for Today

Not only does David spare Saul's life, he also apologizes for cutting a piece of fabric from Saul's robe. In David's mind, even this action showed disrespect for God's choice of Saul.

82. David could have repaid Saul's evil with evil, but he did not. How do we see our Lord Jesus Christ in David's actions?
83. How might you help someone overcome their envy? How might Solomon's words in Proverbs 15:1 guide you?

In Closing

- Locate Nob and Abdullam in a Bible atlas or other reliable resource.
- Think about a time when envy grabbed you. Now, think about ways God might have you react.
- Read 1 Samuel 25–31 to prepare for the next session.

Pray: Gracious Lord, You generously supply friendships to sustain us. When necessary, send these friends into our lives as encouragers just as You used Jonathan in David's life. Keep us from envy's grasp. May we be like David and not like Saul, through Christ our Lord. Amen.