



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 7 – Authentic Despair

As the old tale goes, the devil cleaned out his workshop to sell old tools. They were spread on a table, sharpened and labeled—hatred, envy, lust, gossip, lying—and more besides. Off to one side, a smooth little tool so worn the label was faded: *despair*. But it was priced the highest. Asked why, the devil replied, “It’s the most useful tool—no one even knows it’s mine! I use it to pry open doors tightly bolted against the other tools. Once inside, I can use any tool that suits me.”

David reached a crisis point. Nearly ten years he waited, but nothing changed. Even in the howling wilderness, you run out of places to hide. “How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?”

Goals for This Session:

- Discover how David’s years in exile finally come to an end.
- Consider how God works all things together for good to accomplish His plan.
- Examine the impact that our choices have in the lives of others.
- Pray honest prayers that lead to deeper trust and hold steady with hope.

Ice Breaker

What is the longest you’ve ever waited to achieve a goal?

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **1 Samuel 27:1–12** and **1 Samuel 29:1–30:20** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God’s ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – Losing Heart and Losing His Way

Read 1 Samuel 27:1–12.

It may have been that second encounter with Saul. Did David play and replay it through his mind? David looks at his future and begins to think nothing good can come from this.

1. David was at a low point when he decided to move to Philistine territory. When you consider what any person might experience in prolonged trial, what factors are influencing David's decision?
 - a. The pressure of what others are trying to force upon him (1 Samuel 26:19–20) works itself into David's thinking. In what way?
 - b. "Then David said to himself . . ." When we listen to self-talk, we are liable to get poor advice. Describe what is going through David's mind and how it gets him into trouble.
2. Prayer is conspicuously missing from David's decision-making in this chapter. Why do you think that is?
 - a. If you could sit down with David at this point, what would you say to him?
 - b. Put yourself in David's shoes. What would you need someone to say to you?

Consider the culture that David took his family, his army, and their families into. The Philistine nation was economically strong, had a superior military, and the most advanced technology of the time. Their gods were Dagon (god of nature, agriculture), Ashtaroth (goddess of fertility), and Baalzebub (god of spirits). Simply put, they worshipped environment, sensuality, and spiritualism.

3. For the first time in years, David gets relief from Saul's constant harassment. But at what cost? Describe what David ends up doing and the consequences of his decision.
 - a. How might David have tried to rationalize his sin and justify his behavior?

With so many people to take care of, David wanted something that felt more like home. Ziklag was originally given to Israel but never occupied (Joshua 15:31). In David's time, only the land Israel actually possessed was considered "the presence of the Lord." But Ziklag was borderline territory, inhabited by unbelievers. David was living on the fringes, physically and figuratively, away from the presence of the Lord.

4. Sometimes a believer may choose to live outside of God's will but still want something that feels like home. It's certainly possible to go to church, sing the songs, attend the functions, but have no intention of giving up a sinful habit or secret indulgence. When life presses in and we're tempted, like David, to live on the fringes, what does God's Word tell us?

1 John 2:15–16

Romans 12:2 and 13:11–14

Ephesians 5:11–16

5. Losing heart can make us vulnerable to losing our way. Have you ever been tempted to give up on trusting God and throw in the towel? Briefly share how God brought you through it.

- a. Knowing what you know now, what would you do differently?

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me.
You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!
Psalm 40:17 ESV

Think it over . . .

When I am at a low point and life feels dismal, what do I need to remind myself of about God?

Day Three – A Problem of His Own Making

Read 1 Samuel 29:1–11.

After years of living in caves and looking over his shoulder, it must have felt good for David and his men to settle their families and live like ordinary people do. David had hired himself out as a mercenary to Achish and deceived him into thinking he was a traitor. So far, it worked to David's advantage but that was about to change.

1. David had been with Achish for a year when the Philistines planned a major attack on Israel. Read the opening details of this account in **1 Samuel 28:1–2**. What problem has David created for himself?
 - a. David and Achish had a relationship based on deceit and convenience. Consider what each man stood to gain—and lose—from the other.

2. How do the other Philistine commanders react to David's presence? In what way do they end up helping David?

3. By allying himself with Achish in the first place, David had painted himself into a corner. But God is faithful, even when we aren't (2 Timothy 2:13) and David was spared from going to battle against his own people.
 - a. What does it say about David (and us) that his own efforts to escape a problem led to bigger problems?

 - b. When we are tempted to take a shortcut out of trouble (maybe even now) instead of listening to self-talk, what do we need to *preach to ourselves*?

1 Corinthians 10:12–13

2 Corinthians 12:9

James 1:2–4

Memory Verse

As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me.
You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!
Psalm 40:17 ESV

Think it over . . .

Will I choose to wait *with God* or run ahead on my own?

Day Four – The Way Out of Trouble

Read 1 Samuel 30:1–6.

David was relieved to be going home. He must have felt like a man who just dodged two bullets. He avoided war against Israel without being forced to blow his cover. David surely would have recognized God’s hand in delivering him out of that predicament. “That was close,” he may have thought to himself, “Thank You, Lord, for getting me out of trouble.” But the way out of trouble is never as easy as the way in.

1. David’s relief was short-lived. From a distance, they saw smoke and it wasn’t from cooking fires. What did David and his men come home to find?

2. David experienced crushing pressure on all sides. Anxiety for his own family, personal guilt, and his responsibility to 600 distraught and angry men. This tragedy is hard for us to fathom. Everything he is, everything he knows, everything he has, is on the line.

Before you answer this question, take time to really consider the alternatives. What did David do, and why was it the right decision?

“God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.”

C.H. Spurgeon

3. “Strengthened himself in the Lord” means*: (Check all that apply)
 - a. David gave himself a pep talk. _____
 - b. David submitted to chastening, confessed his sin, asked forgiveness. _____
 - c. David prayed his sorrows and pleaded his case. _____
 - d. David took hope and sought help and looked to God for salvation. _____
 - e. Add your own thought to the list _____

* Patterned from Psalm 38

Memory Verse

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You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!
Psalm 40:17 ESV

Think it over . . .

While I am asking God to meet my urgent need (*Hurry, God!*) what is He asking of me?
Lord, I will not delay to ...

Day Five – God Is Good, All the Time

Read 1 Samuel 30:7–20.

David calls for Abiathar the priest. He is done with self-talk and asks for the Lord's guidance. God assures David that he will overtake the Amalekites and that *all will be recovered*.

1. What runs through your mind while you're tracking down marauders who kidnapped your family, stole your belongings, and burned your home to the ground? Between thoughts of getting loved ones back safely and pushing your body to the edge of injury and exhaustion, there wouldn't be much talk. But surely David prayed and *preached to himself* along the way.

Psalm 34:6–7, 17

Psalm 56:8–9

2. Briefly describe how events unfold for David to defeat the Amalekites and recover all that was taken. Do you see God's hand in the details? In what way?
3. We've seen the Amalekites before. They ruthlessly attacked Israel, going after the vulnerable and exhausted ones who were straggling behind (Deuteronomy 25:18). They were looters and thieves who never missed a chance to plunder God's people.

There are still "Amalekites" who take advantage wherever they can to steal and destroy. By that, we mean the pressure to give in or give up when we most need to *look up* and stand on what is true. When your faith is being ransacked, what does God want you to know?

1 Peter 5:6–10

Jude 1:20–25

Hebrews 12:1–3

4. God is good, all the time. Just ask David. He knew that God was and would *always* be his help and his deliverer. “I would have lost heart,” David wrote, “unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Psalm 27:13).

When David penned that verse he wasn’t sitting in a recliner writing prose for a greeting card. He knew a thing or two about caves and pits and miry bogs. **Believe** is a sturdy, stabilizing word. There is nothing wish-upon-a-star about it. It is also a nurturing word, used to depict the comfort and protection a child would find in the arms of a parent.

What similarities do you see between Psalm 27:13 and Paul’s declaration in Romans 8:28? Why are both scriptures so comforting?

Memory Verse

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You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!
Psalm 40:17 ESV

Think it over . . .

The Lord takes thought for me. Do I take thought for others?
How might God use me to encourage someone else?

After His Heart

“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 NLT

“God found in David a man who would stand in the gap, a man whose heart was fully committed to Him. Will He find that in you?”

Greg Laurie

For you personally, what has been the most important discovery or insight from this study?

How will you put living it into practice in the days ahead?

Prayer Requests
