

LifeWay Bible Studies for Life Series for July 18: The power of petition

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At this point in his life, David is ascending in power, popularity and his relationship to God. Saul, on the other hand, is descending in every way, particularly in his spirit. He has become a man consumed with maintaining his station in life. The actions of these two men present an interesting contrast between a man who desperately wants to accomplish God's will and a man made mad by his need to maintain power.

Saul plots (1 Samuel 22:17-20)

Saul was convinced the priests of Nob have been unfaithful to his throne. In the broadest sense of the word, they had been, because they had given David asylum and provisions as he ran from Saul. In his madness, Saul ordered all of the priests of Nob from the house of Ahitub to be put to death with the sword (v. 17). His orders create an interesting dynamic in the interaction between God's people.

Saul's execution orders were an obvious attempt at self-preservation. He is only concerned with satisfying his own selfish needs. Yet, when he initially gives the orders his guards were unwilling to carry them out (v. 17). Saul then turns to Doeg, an Edomite, and commands him to carry out his ruthless orders and Doeg executes 85 priests of Nob, as well as the residents of Nob (v. 18).

As long as humanity has existed, there have been men and women who were willing to do whatever was necessary to achieve their own objectives

and maintain their station in life. Some will seek allies among the people of God. Thank God there always has been a portion of his people who were unwilling to follow the selfish desires of leaders. Unfortunately, there also has been someone who would participate in accomplishing the evil designs of a spiritual leader.

David pleads (1 Samuel 23:1-5)

David finds himself in a dilemma. He knows Saul is in pursuit and is seeking to destroy and discredit him. At the same time, he receives information Keilah is being decimated by the Philistines (v. 1). He has to determine which direction is best, protect himself or rescue a city. David's decision and the process he used to make his decision are a model of behavior to be emulated by believers of every generation.

When faced with competing direction, David surrendered his own will and sought to seek God's will (v. 1). God gives David direction to go and save Keilah. Yet when David gave orders to his men, they doubted the revelation David had received (v. 3). It is not unusual for contemporaries to doubt the word God has given to his leader. Not everyone sees things the same way, even when one person expresses confidence that their direction is from God. In response, David does what every good leader of God's people should do, he went back to the Lord to ensure he had properly heard God's direction (v. 4). Convinced of God's leadership, David leads his men to Keilah and routs the Philistines there (v. 5).

God's leader must be sure to follow God's leadership and not seek to achieve his own selfish desires, even when they are noble. He also must maintain close fellowship with God to ensure he is accurately interpreting the will of God, and he should not proceed until he absolutely is convinced he has received God's word. Then a true leader must give leadership in following God's will even when others are not as sure of God's direction.

God provides (1 Samuel 23:6, 9-13)

Saul perceived David's "occupation" of Keilah as a strategic blunder and saw David's victory there as an opportunity to trap him. Abiathar, a priest from Nob, had escaped and ran to David (1 Samuel 22:22). As a priest, he brought to David the priest's ephod, which David used to once again inquire of the Lord the direction he should take (v. 10). Convinced Saul would seek him there and convinced the citizens of Keilah will hand him over to Saul, David and his army escaped (v. 13).

It is interesting to note the specificity of David's requests for revelation. He first inquired of the Lord if Saul would seek him in Keilah, and God revealed he would (v. 11). David then asked if the people of Keilah, whom he had just spared from the Philistines, would surrender him to Saul. Again God responds in the affirmative (v. 12).

Through the revelation, David determined to flee. David did not ask God for the big picture, he asked very specific questions. God sometimes desires to provide his children with the specifics of his will to provide them with the confidence they need to accomplish his will.

Conclusion

David had his confidence in God and his will confirmed. By being in right relationship with God, he not only knew but trusted God's revealed will. Even though God's direction required David to forgo his own perceived needs and desire, he put self aside to do God's will. David learned God's will sometimes means denying self for the best interest of others. Those who would desire to lead God's people should experience those same lessons through practical experience.