

WISE COUNSEL FOR TROUBLED TIMES

STUDY EIGHT

Respecting Authority

1 Samuel 18; 24

My strong advice that I believe we need to hear is this: “Stop questioning authority and start respecting it.”

—Charles R. Swindoll

THE course of David’s life changed the day he killed Goliath. He may have entered the field of battle an unknown shepherd boy, but he emerged a national hero. With the sling of a single stone, Goliath’s body crumpled to the dirt and David’s star rocketed to the sky.

News of David’s victory echoed through the canyons of Judah. When the Israelite army marched home for a ticker-tape-style parade with King Saul in the lead, citizens lined the streets cheering. “Women from all the towns of Israel came out to meet King Saul” (1 Samuel 18:6). The women greeted Saul, but their voices acclaimed David.

*They sang and danced for joy with tambourines and cymbals. This was their song:
“Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands!” (18:6–7)*

Their song’s lopsided praise of David ignited Saul’s jealous heart with hatred toward the young champion. David had done nothing against Saul, yet in the coming days, Saul would attempt to kill David, forcing the next rightful king of Israel to flee like a felon on the run.

Even though Saul behaved in an un-kingly manner, he was still the Lord’s anointed—a role that demanded respect. How would David respond to Saul: by kneeling before a king or attacking an enemy? Let’s dig into Scripture to discover David’s response and gain instruction for relating to those in authority over us.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

In the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we always pray for God's Spirit to illumine our minds and hearts as we open God's Word. As Chuck Swindoll advised, "Study without prayer is an incomplete process—a futile effort."¹ You may wish to pray as Chuck prays before he studies the Word: "I often pray, 'Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it.'"²

Write your prayer here if you wish.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Humans have been resisting authority since the beginning of time. The roots of our *resistant*, *resentful*, and *rebellious* nature sink deep into history's soil, all the way to the first family. Adam and Eve's son Cain defied God's authority, and he stoked a rage that led him to murder his own brother (*Genesis 4:1–16*). Similarly, Saul's disobedience and God's rejection of Saul as king led to his murderous hatred of David, God's next choice for king (*1 Samuel 15:1–26; 16:1–13*). Now, dig deeper into Scripture by reading carefully *1 Samuel 18:8–30*.



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Observation: A Biblical Example of Respecting Authority

A key principle in the *Searching the Scriptures* process is observation.³ As you review *1 Samuel 18:8–30*, can you observe any repetitive themes or phrases (specifically, verses 12, 15, and 29)?

Write down what Saul did against David.

What were David's responses to his king who was trying to kill him?



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What might Saul's actions tell you about Saul's motives and character? What do David's responses tell you about his motives and character?

Which of David's character qualities stand out the most to you based on your current circumstances?



Interpretation: David's Strategy of Respect and Trust

David's most dangerous opponent wasn't the nine-foot-nine-inch tall human war machine named Goliath; rather, his greatest foe was his own king, the man who at one time loved him as a son. David felled Goliath with the frontal assault of a well-placed stone. Dealing with Saul would require a different strategy for David: *showing respect to Saul because Saul was the Lord's anointed and trusting God to take care of David's enemy.*

As we seek to understand the meaning of David's actions for us today, let's examine the episode when David encountered Saul in a cave.



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A Difficult Dilemma

The encounter with Saul in a cave put David's respect-and-trust strategy to the ultimate test. Read *1 Samuel 24:1–4*. In this situation, what unlikely factors combined to lead David's men to conclude that the Lord had delivered Saul into David's hands to kill him?

With revenge tantalizingly feasible for David and his men, David crept toward Saul with his knife in his hand. Would David succumb to temptation and stab Saul in the back? Read what David did in *24:4–7*. What thought pricked David's conscience, and how did he communicate that to his men later?

A Remarkable Response

Read the dialogue between David and Saul after Saul left the cave in *1 Samuel 24:8–22*. How did David's respect win over his enemy (*Proverbs 16:7*)?



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If David had bitten off a piece of sweet revenge and killed Saul in order to ascend to the throne, what sour aftertaste would have occurred? What may have been the consequences of his disrespect of the Lord's anointed?

David may not have plunged his knife into Saul's back, but he did break through the stony wall that Saul had erected around his heart. Reread *1 Samuel 24:8–15*, noting David's confession, honest expression of feelings, and reassuring words to Saul—all characteristics of a well-handled confrontation.

God's Reward

What was the eventual outcome of David's respect-and-trust-God strategy (*2 Samuel 2:4*)?

Learn from David; there are lessons to be learned in humility. There are things you can pick up and begin to model. Are you being hurt? So was David. He wrote songs for you in the book of Psalms. David's story is a magnificent story of how the Lord takes a situation that is a real dilemma, where a man has the power to retaliate, but he doesn't because of the respect of God's hand in the life of another. And as a result, the Lord rewards him.

—Chuck Swindoll



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Principles to Live By—Then and Now

Bible stories are a rich source of principles for godly living. We learn best by example, don't we? Lists of points are quickly forgotten, but the story of David's confrontation with Saul sets memorable pegs in our mind so that the next time we're dealing with a Saul-type enemy, we have some guidelines to hang on to. Just keep in mind that adjustments for context are required.

No one today is the "Lord's anointed"; however, the principle of respect for authority remains true. You probably won't confess snipping the corner of a king's cloak, but you may need to confess hurting your boss with verbal snips and cutting criticisms. Consolidate key points of the story as you can, and then create principles—such as: *When confronting someone in authority, be honest about your actions and feelings, address their fears directly, and spell out your values.* David didn't stay hidden in his cave of hurt feelings; he bravely stepped into the light and spoke to his enemy. Perhaps his example will help you do the same.

Can you draw more principles from David's respectful approach to Saul?



Correlation: The Theme of Respect in Scripture

The theme of respect for those in authority winds through Scripture like a mountain stream. Dip your hand into a few passages and note the commands that God issues and character qualities He expects.

Passage	Commands	Qualities
<i>Exodus 20:12</i>		
<i>Micah 6:8</i>		
<i>Romans 13:1–2</i>		
<i>Hebrews 13:17</i>		



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Summarize God's teaching about respecting authority.

Only with a David-like faith in God's sovereign plan for our future can we take the first steps toward respecting those God places in authority over us.

Application: A Few Insights on Cultivating a Submissive Spirit

The final scenes of Saul's life read like a Shakespearean tragedy. His account climaxes with Saul consulting a medium who foretold his being wounded by Philistine archers, his begging his aide to plunge a sword through his heart, and his death by his own hand (1 Samuel 28; 31:1–4). David never once gloated over the death of his enemy but grieved the loss of his king, Saul, as much as the loss of his friend, Jonathan (2 Samuel 1). David remained respectful even after Saul's death.

What can we glean from this account?

- *Expect to be mistreated.* A jealous, fearful, paranoid “Saul” may enter the drama of your life's story in any scene.
- *Anticipate feelings of revenge.* Be prepared to resist the urge to take matters into your own hands.
- *Refuse to fight in the flesh.* Enlist the Spirit of Christ as your source of strength to entrust yourself to God.
- *Determine now to leave all vengeance with God.* “Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God” (Romans 12:19).



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Which of these truths can you apply to your situation in the coming days and in what ways?



A FINAL PRAYER

Conclude your study of David's respect for Saul by fortifying your soul with the following Psalm and then writing a prayer to trust the Lord and leave all vengeance with Him.

*Don't worry about the wicked
or envy those who do wrong.
For like grass, they soon fade away.
Like spring flowers, they soon wither.
Trust in the LORD and do good.
Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.
Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you your heart's desires.
Commit everything you do to the LORD.
Trust him, and he will help you.
He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn,
and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun. (Psalm 37:1–6)*



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My Prayer of Trust

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2017), 160.
2. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures*, 128.
3. To learn about Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



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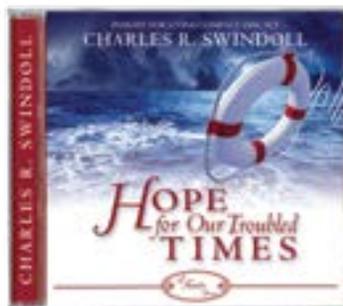
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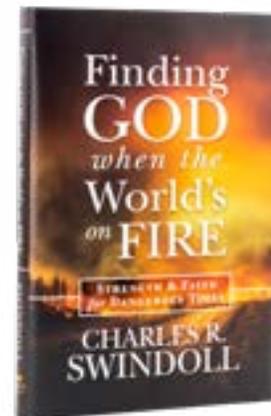
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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

