



Community Group Discussion Guide

January 19, 2025

1 Samuel 19 1-24 | Attempted Murder

MOTIVATE

- ⇒ *Can you give an example from history when someone's obsession led them to irrational and destructive behavior?*

DISCUSS

David killed Goliath and was presented to Saul as a hero. Saul's son Jonathan became a true friend to David. David was given a high rank in Saul's army and had great military success. David married into Saul's family through Michal and she truly loved him. Even after all of this, in 1 Samuel 19:1-24, Saul intensified his efforts to kill David. Saul was plagued by evil spirits that clouded his thinking and led to an irrational suspicion of David. But for all his efforts to the contrary, Saul only contributed to David's rapid rise in popularity. Saul's attempts to destroy him continued to fail because God always intervened to protect David. (See [1 Samuel Overview](#) for more information.)

- ⇒ *In what ways does Saul continue to demonstrate he was no longer fit to serve as Israel's king?*
- ⇒ *Compare and contrast the demise of Saul and the rise of David,*

1 Samuel 19:1-3 *And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David. 2 And Jonathan told David, "Saul my father seeks to kill you. Therefore be on your guard in the morning. Stay in a secret place and hide yourself. 3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you. And if I learn anything I will tell you."*

His previous efforts finding no success, Saul resolved to draw others into his conspiracy against David by ordering all his slaves, as well as his son Jonathan, to kill David. The text reminds the reader that Jonathan took great delight in David. Because of his friendship and commitment to David, instead of obeying Saul, Jonathan warned David about his father's intentions. Jonathan arranged to intervene on David's behalf in hopes of thwarting an attack on David and securing peace between David and Saul.

Jonathan instructed David to go into hiding. Jonathan's plan was to speak with his father and to then tell David what he found out. The fact that David was to be within earshot of the conversation was most likely intended to give him a convenient view of the meeting so he could assess Saul's attitude for himself.¹

- ⇒ *Discuss this quote and how Jonathan's actions demonstrated his loyal love for David: Jonathan had much to gain by David's death. With David out of the way, there would be no question about his right to the throne of Israel.*
- ⇒ *Do you have a person of such loyal love in your life? If so, briefly describe the ways this person demonstrates it.*

1 Samuel 19:4-7 *And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have brought good to you. 5 For he took his life in his hand and he struck down the Philistine, and the LORD worked a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it, and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?" 6 And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan. Saul swore, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." 7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan reported to him all these things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before.*

¹ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 283). Zondervan.

With carefully orchestrated words, Jonathan began by speaking well of David. He then offered three reasons why Saul should reconsider his plot against David:²

1. David was innocent of any wrongdoing and nothing he had done merited his death. David had not sinned against Saul so Saul should not sin against David.
2. David had brought good into Saul's life. What David had done benefitted Saul and all of Israel—particularly the defeat of Goliath and the Philistines. Jonathan rightly attributed the victory to the Lord and reminded Saul of his rejoicing in this victory.
3. Jonathan recognized that if his father killed David without cause, he would sin against David and be guilty of shedding innocent blood.

⇒ **What are your insights into Jonathan's words to Saul?**

Jonathan's logic and eloquence won the day. Saul listened to his son and relented of his plan. In Jonathan's presence Saul took an oath and Jonathan's father and friend were reconciled. While the peaceable relations were short-lived, for the time being Jonathan was able to bring David back to the royal household and his former status. This was the first time Jonathan went to bat for David. It would not be the last. With loyalty and at personal risk, Jonathan continually supported David.

⇒ **How can you model this type of faithful support for other believers?**

1 Samuel 19:8-10 *And there was war again. And David went out and fought with the Philistines and struck them with a great blow, so that they fled before him. 9 Then a harmful spirit from the LORD came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing the lyre. 10 And Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he eluded Saul, so that he struck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night.*

For a while Jonathan's efforts worked. However, the return of conflict with the Philistines required all the military skills that David had displayed on previous occasions. This propelled David once more into the forefront of national attention. More military glory for David resulted in more problems with Saul. This, combined with an evil spirit coming again upon Saul, led to yet another spontaneous and unexpected attempt on David's life.

David was called in to play his harp to soothe the king. While he was listening to David play, Saul tried for the third time to pin David to the wall with his spear. David did not want to remain for a fourth attempt so he fled, intending to escape into the night.³

⇒ **David was being faithful to God and to Saul, yet paying a price for it. Have you been in a situation in which you paid the price for your faithfulness? If so, was it hard to continue staying faithful? Did you find yourself doubting God?**

1 Samuel 19:11-17 *Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, that he might kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, "If you do not escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed." 12 So Michal let David down through the window, and he fled away and escaped. 13 Michal took an image and laid it on the bed and put a pillow of goats' hair at its head and covered it with the clothes. 14 And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He is sick." 15 Then Saul sent the messengers to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him." 16 And when the messengers came in, behold, the image was in the bed, with the pillow of goats' hair at its head. 17 Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me thus and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?" And Michal answered Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go. Why should I kill you?'"*

² Andrews, S. J., & Bergen, R. D. (2009). [1, 2 Samuel](#) (Vol. 6, pp. 138–139). Holman Reference.

³ Andrews, S. J., & Bergen, R. D. (2009). [1, 2 Samuel](#) (Vol. 6, p. 139). Holman Reference.

In his anger, Saul sent men to capture and kill David at his house the next morning. Michal learned of her father's irrational plan, but like her brother, Michal loved David. She warned him of the plot and used a deception tactic to help David escape during the night. David never again returned to the royal court of Saul.

First, Michal let David down through a window of their home, and David was able to get away. Michal anticipated that the men might search the house for David so she placed an idol his bed with an appropriate disguise to make it look like he was lying there.

The image Michal used was called a *teraphim*. The use of these household or family idols was condemned by God. It is not clear where this particular idol in came from. The precise nature of such an idol in the Old Testament is much disputed, and it is apparently only here that one appears large enough to pass for a human under bed coverings.⁴ Thus far, full human-size teraphim have not been discovered by archaeologists. So it is possible that the idol used by Michal was in the shape of a head or a cultic mask.⁵

- ⇒ **What does Michal's use of one of these idols, even to protect David, suggest about her?**
- ⇒ **What do her actions show about her love for David as well as Saul's insane preoccupation with him?**
- ⇒ **Did God need the subterfuge of all the characters of this narrative to help Him protect David?**

When the men came to capture David, Michal told them he was ill. It was only after Saul sent the men back to bring David, bed and all, to the king that the hoax was revealed. When Saul angrily confronted his daughter about the deception, Michal lied to him, making it sound like David had forced her to do it. Something is deeply awry when a future king must crawl through a window, when the wife of a coming king must lie to the father who is still king.

In both the case of Jonathan's disobedience to Saul and Michal's deception of her father, the narrator seems to assume they were motivated by just causes, and they don't appear to be condemned for their actions. The sad but undeniable realization is that Saul was hell-bent on destroying David.

- ⇒ **Is there any room for justifiable falsehood? Is lying justified or even morally required under certain conditions?**⁶
- ⇒ **Are there other biblical stories that seem to demonstrate this? (Examples: The Hebrew midwives in Exodus 1:15-21; Rahab the harlot in Joshua 2:4-6.)**
- ⇒ **How does this account show that ultimately the Lord was with David and protected him?**

1 Samuel 19:18-21 Now David fled and escaped, and he came to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and lived at Naioth. **19** And it was told Saul, "Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah." **20** Then Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. **21** When it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied.

Having no place else to go, David fled to Samuel's home at Ramah about three miles away. David told Samuel everything Saul had done to him. Though Samuel hasn't been heard from since David's anointing, he was evidently active as the leader of a band of prophets at Ramah.

- ⇒ **Considering their previous encounter in 1 Samuel 16, why would the very presence of Samuel be a comfort to David at this point?**

⁴ Arnold, B. T. (2003). *1 & 2 Samuel* (p. 284). Zondervan.

⁵ Andrews, S. J., & Bergen, R. D. (2009). *1, 2 Samuel* (Vol. 6, p. 147). Holman Reference.

⁶ Arnold, B. T. (2003). *1 & 2 Samuel* (p. 285). Zondervan.

⇒ **What can you learn about your own need for spiritual advisors?**

The irony of David's presence in Ramah with Samuel should not be missed. It appears that this is the place where God led Saul and Samuel to meet for the first time and where the old prophet anointed Saul king of Israel. If so, this is also where Saul first received the promise of the Spirit of God and where his heart was transformed.

Now it was David who met Samuel at Ramah. Samuel took David to Naioth at Ramah which probably refers to a type of religious compound where a company of prophets might reside or a remote country dwelling that shepherds might use.⁷ In David's case, it served as place of refuge—something he would speak of numerous times in his psalms. The Lord would surely protect him.⁸

When Saul heard this, he sent three separate squads to capture and arrest David. However, each time the Spirit of God safeguarded David by causing all the soldiers to do nothing by prophesy, thereby distracting them from their orders.

⇒ **How does God continue show Himself to be completely in control of the events of David's life?**

⇒ **What does this reveal about God?**

1 Samuel 19:22-24 *Then he himself went to Ramah and came to the great well that is in Secu. And he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" And one said, "Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah." 23 And he went there to Naioth in Ramah. And the Spirit of God came upon him also, and as he went he prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. 24 And he too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night. Thus it is said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"*

Frustrated, Saul finally went to capture David himself. Before he even reached the group, the Spirit of God came upon Saul and he began prophesying as the others before him had done. This happened to Saul's messengers only after they had arrived there, but Saul prophesied before he arrived, while he walked along the road. God was reminding Saul that He could act whenever and wherever He chose.

Samuel had condemned Saul for rejecting the word of the Lord. Now Saul was forced to proclaim the same word that he had earlier rejected. Not only did Saul prophesy, but when he arrived, he stripped off his robe. Since God had rejected Saul as king (1 Samuel 15:23, 28), it's almost as if he was not allowed to wear his royal attire in His presence. The basic dress for men and women was a full-length outer garment, along with a full-length under garment of lighter material. The term "naked" does not necessarily mean to be totally nude. A person who took off his or her outer garment was considered nude even if the under garment was still worn.

After removing his robe, Saul lay down before Samuel and all the other prophets for an entire day and night. Lying naked in public was a great shame in the ancient Near East. Here was Israel's king humiliating himself before God. This also gave David plenty of time to escape. The same divine intervention that made it possible for David to kill Goliath now prohibited Saul from killing David.⁹ The actions of Saul revived a question first asked when Saul was anointed king over Israel in 1 Samuel 10:11: Is Saul also among the prophets? There it indicated a positive change in Saul's life as the Lord's anointed. Here it is negative. At this point Saul is perceived as neither a genuine prophet nor a legitimate king.¹⁰

⇒ **Discuss this quote: Just as the first Spirit-anointing signaled the beginning of Saul's career, this one signals the end.**¹¹

⁷ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 290). Zondervan.

⁸ Andrews, S. J., & Bergen, R. D. (2009). [1, 2 Samuel](#) (Vol. 6, p. 140). Holman Reference.

⁹ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 292). Zondervan.

¹⁰ Andrews, S. J., & Bergen, R. D. (2009). [1, 2 Samuel](#) (Vol. 6, pp. 140–141). Holman Reference.

¹¹ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 291). Zondervan.

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: Saul intensified his campaign to kill David. He was willing to use his slaves, his oldest son, his daughter, his soldiers, and his own efforts to accomplish his murderous desire. The evil spirit of Saul had infected the whole scene.¹²

- ⇒ *What spiritual application can you make at this point from the behavior of Saul?*
- ⇒ *Does Saul's behavior bring a caution to you about a specific situation in your life?*
- ⇒ *Both Jonathan and Samuel bring hope to David in the midst of his terrible circumstance. Who has done the same for you? How can you do this for others in your world?*

2. Pray: Praise God for His sovereign and providential control over the events of our lives. Thank Him for the times you've witnessed His protection over you—and for the times you don't even know about. Ask Him to give you the peace that only He provide.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Holman New Testament Commentary, 1 and 2 Samuel*, pages 132-149.
- *The Illustrated Bible Guide to Bible Customs and Curiosities*, by George W. Knight, page 83.
- *The NIV Application Commentary, 1 and 2 Samuel* pages 281-292.
- *Shepherd's Notes, 1 and 2 Samuel*, pages 138-149.

¹² Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 284). Zondervan.