

3—King Saul’s View of David: A Popular Rival

Text: 1 Samuel 18-19



Memory Verse: “And the women sang to one another as they celebrated,

“Saul has struck down his thousands,
and David his ten thousands.”

(1 Samuel 18:7, ESV).



childbearing contests. Unfortunately, sibling rivalry is how Joseph ends up in a pit by the hands of his jealous brothers (and thanks to Rachel and Leah there were a lot of brothers). Over and over, we find the problem in Scriptures and that’s just the book of Genesis!

How about in your life? Do you ever feel an unspoken or spoken sense of rivalry with a fellow athlete, another student, a co-worker, or even your own brother or sister? Does it feel like there is a constant competition where one is trying to outdo the other? Do you sometimes have feelings of anger, resentment, or jealousy when you just seem to get outplayed, outsmarted, outworked, or even out-praised? This tinge of anger is a dangerous sign in our hearts. We need to pay attention to it and deal with it, and those it affects, with spiritual sensitivity.

In the life of King Saul, we begin to see these first seeds of bitterness creep into his life after the defeat of Goliath. While you would think he would be happy Israel’s archenemy was now on the run, he was childishly jealous. He was jealous David was getting the credit and the bulk of the glory and not himself. His thirst for ambition combined with David’s success became a dangerous pair of opposing forces in his heart. It affected his view of David. *We need to learn from King Saul’s flawed views so we can avoid suspecting others as rivals who we should be working with as friends.*

Discussion Questions:

1. After David’s victory over Goliath, list some of the positive things that begin to occur as a result (see 1 Samuel 17:51-18:7). Overall, what seems to be the reaction to this major battle victory?

The topic of rivalries comes up in college and pro sports all the time: North Carolina vs. Duke, Alabama vs. Auburn, IU vs. Purdue, Ohio State vs. Michigan (you’re not even allowed to say their name). ESPN even has a “Rivalry Week.”

Rivalry is a Bible topic too. We see it in the first family in Cain and Abel. Yet, it does not stop there. It shows up again with Hagar and Sarah, is passed along to Isaac and Ishmael, then again with Jacob and Esau, then again with Rachel and Leah’s

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2. However, what is the reaction of King Saul and what seems to trigger his jealousy (1 Samuel 18:7-9)? As David succeeds, does Saul's jealousy seem to get any better (see 1 Samuel 18:28-29)?

3. How does this "*distressing spirit*" within King Saul begin to turn into negative and dangerous actions in the list of passages below? What can this teach us about the various means people may use to attack us?

- 1 Samuel 18:9—
- 1 Samuel 18:10-11—
- 1 Samuel 18:12—
- 1 Samuel 18:13—
- 1 Samuel 18:20-21—
- 1 Samuel 18:24-27—
- 1 Samuel 19:1, 9-10—
- 1 Samuel 19:11, 17--

4. How might David have been tempted to react to King Saul? How are you tempted to react when a rival is unjustly suspicious or provokes you? Yet, how does David act (1 Samuel 18:14-16, 30)?

5. This is not the end of Saul's obsession with David. However, it is a fitting summary of Saul's downward spiral as David's trajectory keeps growing upwards. Who, ultimately, is hurt when we are guilty of sinful jealousy and rivalry (see Galatians 5:17-21)? Rather than rivalry, what would have been a better response to David's courage and growing popularity among the people (Romans 12:15; cp. Galatians 5:22-23)?

Key Lessons:

- If we allow a root of bitterness to grow it will become a full-grown tree!
- Enemies will arise. Keep doing what is right (see Romans 12:17-21).
- Rather than jealousy towards others' success, respond with rejoicing!

Additional Notes: _____