



Studies in the Life of David

Text

First Samuel 26:1-25

Topic

David and Abishai come out of their wilderness hiding place and walk right in to the camp of King Saul

Title

Two Wild & Courageous Guys

Introduction

Wilderness survival seems popular these days. A recent article in USA Today stated,

Based on the mushrooming number of survival-type shows on cable, we're either in a world of hurt or should know how to prepare for one.

- You can tune in to watch *Man vs. Wild* with Bear Grylls.
- Les Stroud hosts *Survivorman*.
- *Dual Survivor* follows Dave Canterbury Cody Lundin as they are dropped into scenarios that they say could happen to anyone.
- *Man, Woman, Wild* is unique in that it features a married couple. Mykel Hawke is a former Special Forces survival expert. His wife, Ruth England, is a TV journalist. Together, they take on some of the most forbidding and remote locations in the world.
- Survival TV has also shifted to urban settings. *The Colony* is a controlled experiment to see exactly what it would take to survive and rebuild under extreme urban circumstances.
- Survival shows are about to get weirder. Currently under development: *Life After an Alien Invasion*, a potential series for the National Geographic Channel.

We're studying the life of David. He finds himself in the wilderness, in a survival situation.

1 Samuel 26:2 Then Saul arose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph.

What survival technique would David use in the Wilderness of Ziph?

1 Samuel 26:6 Then David answered, and said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother of Joab, saying, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?"

Instead of avoiding the danger, David approached it, walked right into it, and invited two of his men to come along for the lesson.

As is so much in the Old Testament, this is an illustration for us of our Christian life. Because we are on our way to Heaven, looking for the city whose builder and maker is God, the world is a wilderness to us, filled with spiritual danger. Our king, the Lord, Jesus Christ, invites us every day to walk with Him right into the danger. If we want to survive we'll need to understand the *lesson* and the *lecture* in this passage.

I'll therefore organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Need To Learn The Wilderness Lesson That Was Taught To Abishai, and #2 You Need To Deliver The Wilderness Lecture That Was Told To Abner.

#1 You Need To Learn The Wilderness Lesson
That Was Taught To Abishai
(v1-12)

Not only does David walk right into danger, right into the enemy encampment. He and his man have a long conversation there while Saul and his men are sleeping. It's the Holy Spirit's way of telling us that there's a lesson for us.

David is going to be for us a type of Jesus, teaching us how to survive in the wilderness which is this fallen world as we are on our way home.

1 Samuel 26:1 Now the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not hiding in the hill of Hachilah, opposite Jeshimon?"

1 Samuel 26:2 Then Saul arose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph.

This is the second time the men of Ziph tried to aid Saul by giving him intel regarding David's whereabouts.

People are watching you, always watching you. Nonbelievers seem especially intent on observing your life for flaws and failures so they can give a negative report. The goal is to be like Daniel who, when his enemies were watching him, could only be faulted for his devotion to the Lord.

When you do fail, it gives opportunity to show the grace and mercy of the Lord as He forgives you and cleanses you.

1 Samuel 26:3 And Saul encamped in the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon, by the road. But David stayed in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.

David "stayed in the wilderness." *So should we!* As believers, we have our camp in the wilderness. It's the church and our fellowship with one another. From it we venture out each day into the world - to our jobs, to our schools, to wherever God has assigned us. It's why believers have adopted the phrase, "*in* the world but not *of* the world."

1 Samuel 26:4 David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul had indeed come.

1 Samuel 26:5 So David arose and came to the place where Saul had encamped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army. Now Saul lay within the camp, with the people encamped all around him.

1 Samuel 26:6 Then David answered, and said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother of Joab, saying, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you."

Facing a force five-times larger than his own David decides to not just stay, but to approach the enemy in his own camp. Of interest to us is that he invited two of his men to join him. One hung back while one accompanied him.

Ahimilech hanging back represents a person we might label a ‘closet Christian.’ They want to fly under the radar, not really taking any risks out in the world. They aren’t very proactive in showing or sharing their faith.

If that describes you then ask the Lord to baptize you with His Holy Spirit. Ask Him and keep on asking Him to give you the boldness to be His witness - **then watch what happens!**

Abishai did not hesitate to follow David. He’s who we want to be in this story.

1 Samuel 26:7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night; and there Saul lay sleeping within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. And Abner and the people lay all around him.

1 Samuel 26:8 Then Abishai said to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not have to strike him a second time!"

That’s the way I’d have seen it! That was the natural, logical way of approaching the situation. Ah, but there was also a spiritual way of approaching the situation and that is what David will teach Abishai.

Faith isn’t foolish. It isn’t a leap in the dark. But neither does it follow the wisdom of this world. There is always something more going on in your circumstances. God is working in you to make you more like Jesus. Your circumstances are designed to draw out spiritual responses, not fleshly, worldly ones. God doesn’t put you in a situation to see how smart you are but rather to see how submissive you’ve become.

1 Samuel 26:9 But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?"

Lesson one: Behavior should be determined by belief. Because David knew that Saul was still God’s anointed king, he knew that he should not kill Saul. That could *never* be God’s will.

1 Samuel 26:10 David said furthermore, "As the Lord lives, the Lord shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish.

Lesson two: God is over all our circumstances. He is sovereign and accomplishes His will through them by His divine providence. My part is to submit to Him within the circumstances I find myself in.

1 Samuel 26:11 The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed..."

"The Lord forbid" can be understood two ways:

1. It means the Lord had "forbid" that David or anyone else strike Saul.
2. Therefore "the Lord forbid" - *God forbid*, we would say - that I would do something the Lord forbids!

Thus lesson three, then, is to always agree with God, no matter the cost.

What would be the cost of David living by principle, submitting to God in his circumstances and agreeing with Him? **He would continue to be hunted down as a fugitive in the wilderness!**

Circumstances and natural wisdom said, "Pick up the spear and kill Saul." If we allow circumstances and our own wisdom to dictate our behavior, we go off the rails. We 'better' our situation, it seems, for a time. But we ruin ourselves spiritually.

Maybe you are in what you consider a desperate or depressing situation. Maybe it's your marriage. Do you have biblical grounds for a divorce - adultery or abandonment? If not, quit thinking about murdering your marriage! Believe God, submit to His will, agree with Him and let Him mature and grow you within it.

1 Samuel 26:11 The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed. But please, take now the spear and the jug of water that are by his head, and let us go."

1 Samuel 26:12 So David took the spear and the jug of water by Saul's head, and they got away; and no man saw or knew it or awoke. For they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen on them.

Taking the spear and the jug showed that David was the truly victorious person in this story. He could easily have killed Saul but instead he spared him in submission to God.

Jesus can easily deliver you from your circumstances. If He doesn't, then it's because He wants you to be victorious in them by acting and reacting spiritually, the way a person filled with the Holy Spirit can and ought to.

#2 You Need To Deliver The Wilderness Lecture That Was Told To Abner (v13-25)

Abner was King Saul's commander. He's a guy loyal to the wrong king. He represents nonbelievers who, in a sense, are loyal to the wrong king. Satan is called in the New Testament "the prince of the power of the air" and "the god of this world." Nonbelievers are described as being taken captive by him to do his bidding. It's not that they are possessed, but that their possessions, their position, their passions are manipulated by the devil in order to keep them serving self rather than seeking the Savior.

1 Samuel 26:13 Now David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar off, a great distance being between them.

1 Samuel 26:14 And David called out to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Do you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner answered and said, "Who are you, calling out to the king?"

1 Samuel 26:15 So David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy your lord the king."

We stand on a hill, too. It's Calvary - the place where our Lord was crucified for us that we might be free from the penalty and punishment of our sins. It's a place of empowering to speak the truth of the Word of God.

Essentially what we have here is a lecture, a sermon, really, exposing Abner as lost, in the wrong camp, following the wrong king.

"Are you not a man?," David asked. In other words, everyone is in the same situation. Didn't matter that it could be said of Abner, "who is like you in Israel?" All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Abner failed in his primary purpose of guarding the king. Apart from a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, you cannot help but fail in life. Oh, you might succeed outwardly, but you will never fulfill the purpose for which you were created until you come to the Lord.

“One of the people came in to destroy your lord the king,” David said. All it takes is **one** believer walking by faith with the Lord to defeat the enemy right in the stronghold of his encampment. If you feel alone, outnumbered, over-matched, think of David and Abishai standing in the midst of three-thousand and one hostile enemies.

1 Samuel 26:16 This thing that you have done is not good. As the Lord lives, you deserve to die, because you have not guarded your master, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the jug of water that was by his head."

Not only do we “deserve to die,” we are born dead in our trespasses and sins. But “the Lord lives” and He is not willing any should perish but that all would come to repentance.

David was delivering the Gospel to these guys. It's the ultimate wilderness survival to come to Christ before it's too late.

When looking at types and illustrations in Scripture it's important we don't press them too far. While we can understand the picture of Abner as a nonbeliever in the camp of the wrong king, Saul is not really a type of Satan. He, too, is a person needing to hear the Word and get it together.

1 Samuel 26:17 Then Saul knew David's voice, and said, "Is that your voice, my son David?" David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king."

1 Samuel 26:18 And he said, "Why does my lord thus pursue his servant? For what have I done, or what evil is in my hand?"

1 Samuel 26:19 Now therefore, please, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant: If the Lord has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering. But if it is the children of men, may they be cursed before the Lord, for they have driven me out this day from sharing in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.'

1 Samuel 26:20 So now, do not let my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord. For the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, as when one hunts a partridge in the mountains."

1 Samuel 26:21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly."

We've shown before why we think Saul was a believer, only one who was totally backslidden and in the flesh. Here he vacillates again, seeming to repent but with no real heart intent to follow the Lord.

1 Samuel 26:22 And David answered and said, "Here is the king's spear. Let one of the young men come over and get it.

Think about it. David had the spear and the jug of water. Why give back the thing that seemed most dangerous in the hands of Saul and withhold the jug?

For one thing it showed Saul that the real weapons of warfare are not carnal. It's like the time David faced-off against Goliath and said to him, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel... (First Samuel 17:45).

For another thing, it showed Saul what he really needed, what he truly lacked - the life giving water of the Spirit of God.

David had weapons of his own - spiritual weapons which could not be overcome. We see three of them in the closing verses.

1 Samuel 26:23 May the Lord repay every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the Lord delivered you into my hand today, but I would not stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed.

1 Samuel 26:24 And indeed, as your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the Lord, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation."

1 Samuel 26:25 Then Saul said to David, "May you be blessed, my son David! You shall both do great things and also still prevail." So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

David's spiritual weapons were "righteousness," "faithfulness," and compassion.

I might not know “righteousness” was a spiritual weapon except for Second Corinthians 6:7 which refers to, “the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left...”

“Righteousness” is a weapon and thus when David did the right thing he disarmed his opponent and opened a way for him to see his need for God and eternal life.

“Faithfulness” is another spiritual characteristic David listed and it, too, can be a weapon. David’s faithfulness to follow the Lord exposed Saul’s unfaithfulness and, at least for a moment, brought him near to repentance.

In verse twenty-four David said that Saul’s life was “valued much this day in [his] eyes.” He saw Saul and was moved with compassion in that he understood Saul was an eternal person with a destiny and final destination. He was willing to lay down his own life, or at least put it at risk, for the sake of giving Saul further opportunity to get right with God.

Christians have had to survive in the wilderness of this world for centuries. As we read in the Book of Hebrews concerning those who’ve come before us,

Hebrews 11:32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:
Hebrews 11:33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

Hebrews 11:34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Hebrews 11:35 Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

Hebrews 11:36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.

Hebrews 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented -

Hebrews 11:38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

Hebrews 11:39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

Hebrews 11:40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

That is our heritage. We survive in the wilderness of this world by learning the lessons Jesus teaches and by lecturing to others by word and example that they, too, can be on their way to Heaven, to the city whose builder and maker is God.

