

# David Shows Mercy to King Saul



**Scripture Reference:** [1 Samuel 26](#)

**Suggested Theme:** God is merciful, so we should show mercy to others.

**Memory Verse:** “Those who give mercy to others are happy. Mercy will be given to them.” [Matthew 5:7, ICB](#)

## Story Overview:

Saul continued to be jealous of David. He hunted him and tried to kill him. David had raised his own armies and could have fought Saul, but he did not. He respected Saul as king. David trusted the Lord to know when it was time for him to become king. Once, David came to Saul’s camp and found Saul sleeping. He quietly took Saul’s spear and water jug to prove to Saul how close he had been. After walking a long distance away, David called to Saul and told him that he could have killed him but chose to show mercy. Mercy means to show kindness even though we have the power or opportunity to hurt someone.

## Background Study:

Saul continued to chase David around the region. His hatred of David made him want to kill him. For some time, David had been dodging Saul’s soldiers. During this time, Saul often repented for his efforts to kill David. However, shortly after each brief period of repentance, Saul renewed his efforts to find and kill David.

Reading 1 Samuel chapters 21-25, we find David in several places trying to stay out of the way of King Saul.

- Priests reluctantly helped him in the town of Nob. Sadly, Saul later considered this as harbouring an enemy and had the priests executed.
- In Gath, David became afraid of being revealed, so he acted as if he was insane.
- Even though he was on the run, David’s following grew. At the Cave of Adullam, he was joined by his family and more fighting men. Anyone in debt or with problems also began to join the group.
- David seeks wisdom from God and saves the city of Keilah.
- After this, while seeking the safety of the wilderness, David had the perfect opportunity to kill Saul. When he and his men hid in the back of the cave, Saul quietly entered to go to the toilet. His men wanted David to kill Saul but David respected the kingship and refused.

In each of these situations, David refuses to hurt the king. In today’s lesson, we find David and the men who had sided with him were hiding near Ziph, a city in the hill country of southern Judah. The land between the city and the Dead Sea was desolate. The inhabitants of this region had betrayed David and revealed his

location to Saul.

Saul's army camped near David's hiding place. There were 3000 men in Saul's army. David knew where they were because he had sent out scouts to check on Saul. During the night, David and one of his men, Abishai, snuck into Saul's camp. At that point, David's actions were truly admirable. David could easily have killed his tormentor. He did not, and he even prevented Abishai from doing so. David's respect for God extended to Saul. David knew that as long as Saul was alive, Saul was God's anointed and appointed king. It was up to God to remove Saul from the throne of Israel. David would trust God to keep His promise and not attempt to claim the throne himself.

David's companions could not understand David's willingness to respect a man whose actions earned him no respect. David's loyalty to Saul may have confused David's companions, but it probably gave them a greater respect for David's integrity. David had the power to hurt Saul, but he chose to show mercy instead.

David told Abishai and the others to take the spear and water jug near King Saul's head. Saul and his men continued to sleep because the Lord was causing them to have a deep sleep. After the group left the camp, they walked to the top of a nearby hill and called out to Saul and the leader of his army, Abner. David asked them where the spear and jug were, and they knew that David had been in the camp and had not killed them.

Saul told David he was sorry (again), but David refused his invitation to come and join them in camp. After all, Saul had said this several times in the past. David returned the spear and went on his way instead.

### **Way to Introduce the Story:**

"Have any of you ever woken up in the night because you heard a sound? What noises wake you in the night?" (Share your own story if you have one) "In today's story we are going to learn about someone that was sleeping so deeply that they did not hear someone walk right beside where they were sleeping. They didn't even wake up when someone took something away from a spot right beside their head!"

### **The Story:**

David traveled around the country, trying to avoid King Saul. Even though David had run away from King Saul, the king continued to try to find him and hurt him. At first, David was alone, but soon, people began to come and follow him.

One time, King Saul gathered 3000 soldiers and went looking for David. Some men came to Saul and told him they knew where David was hiding. Saul decided to take his army and make a camp near that place.

David had heard about Saul and his army. He had sent scouts out to see where Saul was camped. David wanted to go and see Saul's camp, so he asked his friend, Abishai, to go with him.

David and Abishai waited until night, then snuck close to King Saul's camp. They saw that the soldiers were sleeping and decided to go down and get a closer look.

Not one of the king's soldiers woke up. David and Abishai walked right up to where King Saul was sleeping. Abishai wanted to kill Saul. That would mean that Saul could never hurt his friend David again.

David and Abishai could have killed the king, and no one would have known. Everyone was asleep so that no one could have stopped them. Even though David could have hurt the king, he decided to show the king mercy. Mercy means showing someone kindness even though you are stronger than them and could hurt them if you wanted to. David decided to show kindness (mercy) to King Saul.

David reminded Abishai that Saul was still the king God had chosen. Someday, Saul would die, and David would be king, but David wanted to wait until God thought it was the right time.

David noticed that Saul's spear and water jug were right beside him. He told Abishai to take those with them. David and Abishai then walked away from the camp. Still, no one woke up. God had caused a deep sleep to come upon the whole camp.

David and Abishai kept walking until they reached the top of a hill. They were far enough away that Saul's army could not reach them quickly. David called out to Saul's camp. He especially called out to a man named Abner. Abner was the commander of Saul's army. Abner was supposed to protect the king, but he had never woken up, even when David and Abishai walked beside him.

"Wake up, Abner!" David yelled out. "Why didn't you protect your king?"

At first, Abner did not understand. Then David yelled, "Have you noticed that King Saul's spear and water jug are no longer right beside his head?"

When Abner looked down, he saw that the spear and jug were missing. Then he knew what David was talking about. David must have been right inside the camp. How else would he have known about the spear and water jug? Abner knew that David could have hurt Saul but had chosen to show mercy instead. David had not hurt the king.

When King Saul heard David's voice, he said he was sorry. He invited David down to the camp, but David knew he could not trust King Saul. The king had said sorry to David in the past but still tried to hurt him. David left Saul's spear and jug on a rock where Saul would find them. Then David went on his way again.

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## Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

[Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.](#)

View this slideshow and download it from the original source: <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/david-saul-cave/>

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## Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

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## Review:

- Why did David have to keep travelling around the country and finding hiding places? (Saul was trying to kill him)

- Was David alone when he travelled and hid from Saul and Saul's men? (No, men started to travel with him because they were loyal to David. Once, David's family joined him in hiding)
- Who went into King Saul's camp at night? (David and his friend, Abishai)
- David did not kill Saul even though he had the power to do so. What is that called? (Mercy)
- What is mercy? (Showing kindness instead taking revenge, harming, or punishing someone, even though you have the opportunity or motive to)
- Why did David not kill King Saul? (David respected God and wanted to honor God's choice to let Saul be King. David trusted God would make him King when it was the right time)
- Why did Abishai take Saul's spear and water jug? (To prove that he and David had been right beside Saul while he was sleeping)
- What did this story teach you about God?

### Reflection:

- What part of this story is most interesting to you?
- What do you think it looked and sounded like when David and Abishai went to Saul's camp at night, with all the people sleeping?
- How do you think David and Abishai felt as they walked through Saul's tent and the sleeping army?
- How do you think Abner (Saul's commander) felt when he realized David and Abishai could have killed Saul?
- Do you think it was easy or hard for David to show Saul mercy? Was it hard for Abishai? Why?
- If you were David, would you have shown Saul mercy or not?
- When would kids be able to show someone mercy?
- Have you ever shown someone mercy? How did it make you feel?
- Has God ever shown you mercy and forgiveness?
- Is there someone you can show mercy to this week?

### Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

### Song Suggestions:

- [I've Got Peace Like a River Song](#)
- [Read Your Bible, Pray Everyday Song](#)
- [Books of the Old Testament Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more song options.

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## Activities and Crafts:

- [How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.](#)
- [Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.](#)

### Activities:

- Use items like boxes, plants, and rocks to recreate a scene to act out the story. Draw pictures of David and Saul and attach them to upturned paper cups to create stand-up figures. If possible, add a little sword and a water jug. Move the figures around the scene to depict King Saul trying to catch and hurt David. Finish with David taking the spear and jug while Saul sleeps. Younger children, especially, will enjoy this activity.
- Have children look up “mercy” in the dictionary and write the definition on the board.
- Role-play situations where the children can show mercy (playing a game with a younger child, stopping and helping an elderly person walk to their car, etc.)
- Before asking review questions, instruct the children to stand on tip-toe if they know the answer. This is a fun way to ask and answer questions.
- Write the memory verse and reference on the chalk/whiteboard. Let the children say it with you a few times. Erase one word and let them say it again. Erase another word and say it again. Do this over and over until the entire verse is erased. The children will then know the verse!
- Game: Place an item on the floor along with a cushion. One child should play the part of Saul. The child should be blindfolded, lie on the cushion, and pretend to sleep. Choose one child to come and take the item away quietly. The child who has picked up the item should lay it down in an agreed-upon place and then join the rest of the group. When he or she says “mercy”, the “sleeping” child removes their blindfold and guesses who took the item. Children will quickly learn to disguise their voices.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

### Crafts:

- Write the outlines for the letters M-E-R-C-Y on a piece of paper. Leave space inside each letter to write or draw. Guide children in filling the insides of the letters with pictures or words describing acts of mercy.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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## Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Illustrations from Free Bible Images](#)

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**Date**

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