

1 Samuel 21 “When God Doesn't Make Sense”[\[1\]](#)

Series: “*Learning to Wait on God: The Life of David Before He Became King*”

1 Samuel 16-31

**Think about it:** Just because God's activities in my life may not make sense to me doesn't mean He is not in control.

David learned this lesson in the experience described in 1 Samuel 21. We looked at this text this past Sunday morning for it provides the backdrop for Psalm 52.

*Background:* Apparently, David was a young man of no more than 20 when he was forced to flee from Saul (BKC). As the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* points out:

"David lived out a "Robin Hood" existence for nearly 10 years. This period of time is reckoned from the fact that David was 30 when he began to rule over Judah at Hebron (2 Sam. 5:4), his accession occurring immediately after Saul's death (2 Sam. 2:10-11). David had spent a year and four months among the Philistines just before that (1 Sam. 27:7) and, as just suggested, was only about 20 when exiled from Saul. The events of chapters 21-26 must then represent only a fraction of David's activity during this period. But God was teaching David many things in those days, lessons David still shares with all who read his psalms which find their setting in this turbulent period of his life (see, e.g., Pss. 18; 34; 52; 54; 56-57). All these things were surely working together to prepare David to be the kind of leader who would glorify God and inspire His people."

At the end of 1 Sam 20, David left Jonathan, and fled for his life.

Q: Where did he go? V 1 To Nob

Q: Where is Nob? See map--It was halfway between Jerusalem and Gibeah.

Q: Why would David head there? Two reasons...

1. He was familiar with it.

It was the region where he grew up (the hill country of Judah ).

2. There was a man of God there, Ahimelech.

Nob was a "city of priests" (22:17). Apparently the tabernacle was there at this time. The ark was captured in battle in 1104 B.C., and rested at Kiriath Jearim since then. In 1 Sam 21, the ark is presumed to be at Nob.

Discuss: In ch 19, when fleeing from Saul, David fled to be with Samuel in Ramah. In ch 20, he's with Jonathan. In ch 21, he flees to Ahimelech at Nob. If who you associate with reveals a lot about a person, what does this tell us about David?

## Outline of 1 Samuel 21:

### I. Scene #1: David at Nob with Ahimelech (1-9)

What happened at Nob?

A. David met with Ahimelech (1-2).

1. Ahimelech was afraid (1).
2. David assured the priest (2).

B. David made two requests.

1. He asked for bread (3-6).
2. He asked for a sword (8-9).

C. David was seen by a servant of Saul (7).

### II. Scene #2: David at Gath with Achish (10-15).

A. David's reputation preceded him (10-11).

B. David's response was instinctive (12-13).

1. He was afraid (12).
2. He pretended to be insane (13).

C. David's enemy wrote him off (14-15).

Lessons:

1. Some of the best lessons in life are learned when...

...we're alone

...we're facing a great trial

...we may feel that God doesn't make sense

2. Someone has well said, "We must never doubt in the darkness what God has revealed to us in the light."

### **I. Scene #1: David at Nob with Ahimelech (1-9)**

What happened at Nob? Three events...

A. David met with Ahimelech (1-2).

Q: How did Ahimelech react?

1. *Ahimelech was afraid (1).*

Q: Why was he afraid?

*2. David assured the priest (2).*

Q: How did he do it? What did he tell him? V 2 He fabricated a story about being on a top-secret mission (another misrepresentation of the truth...).

B. David made two requests.

Q: What was the first, in v 3?

*1. He asked for bread (3-6).*

Q: What was the difference between "common bread" and "hallowed bread" (4)? It had to do with the ceremonial law (Lev 24:5-9). The hallowed bread was for the priests, but Ahimelech said he would give it to David.

Q: What stipulation did the priest say David must have kept? V 4 kept from women (Ex 19:14-15).

So the priest gave him the showbread (6) (note: God didn't intend His people to become legalists who kept the letter but missed the intent of the law).

We'll come back to v 7...

*2. He asked for a sword (8-9).*

Q: Why did David say he needed a sword? He left in haste.

Discuss: Wouldn't this have sounded a little strange to Ahimelech? Perhaps, but he had no reason to doubt David, a man of great integrity (see 22:14).

Q: What sword did he have? Goliath's (9) (Why was this sword at Nob? It had great religious significance, as a reminder of one of God's greatest interventions in behalf of His people).

C. David was seen by a servant of Saul (7).

Q: Who was it? Doeg

Q: What was his occupation? The chief of Saul's herdsmen; Is that significant? What was David's former occupation? Shepherd (Any jealousy lurking in Doeg's heart?)

Why are we told Doeg was there that day? We'll find out in ch 22.

## **II. Scene #2: David at Gath with Achish (10-15).**

Q: David fled to Gath (see map). What is significant about that city? It was the hometown of the dead Philistine hero, Goliath!

Q: Why, acc to v 10, did he go there? Fear. What did he find when he arrived?

A. David's reputation preceded him (10-11).

This was too good to be true for the inhabitants of Gath . They had heard about David. How? His "song" was on the top of the charts in Israel , and they got tired of hearing it! Now, they had him in their back yard, defenseless!

Q: How did David respond? V 12 David went from fear to fear!

B. David's response was instinctive (12-13).

David did some instinctive, fast thinking. He knew his life was in jeopardy.

1. *He was afraid (12).*

2. *He pretended to be insane (13).*

Q: How? He acted like a madman, made marks on the gate, and let saliva run down his beard. What a sight!

Q: What effect did his behavior have on Achish, the king of Gath ?

C. David's enemy wrote him off (14-15).

The NIV is vivid, "Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me?"

Discuss: What is the purpose of 1 Samuel 21? Why did God record this story?

Clue: What is God trying to teach David?

**Lessons:**

1. *Some of the best lessons in life are learned when...*

...we're alone

...we're facing a great trial

...we may feel that God doesn't make sense

2. *Someone has well said, "We must never doubt in the darkness what God has revealed to us in the light."*

At this point in David's life, life was a big contradiction. On the one hand, he knew God had said he was chosen to be king; he had seen God work through him to destroy Goliath; God allowed him to marry into the royal family; God had given him a great friend in Jonathan. But on the other hand, he was being hunted like an animal, a condemned criminal, by his own father-in-law! Life seemed like a big question-mark. The promise of God seemed to be in contradiction with reality.

Q: What did David do? The psalms he wrote tell us. He affirmed God (see Ps 7:1, 17). So must we. How do we do it?

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[\[1\]](#) These are unedited teaching notes used initially for a Wednesday evening Bible study at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . They are provided for your edification as you personally study God's life-changing Word. Pastor Brad Brandt