

Psalm 54 "God's Kind of Man" [**](#)

Main Idea: Learning from David's example in Psalm 54, when he has experienced the pain of betrayal, God's kind of man responds in three ways.

Background: David was betrayed by the Ziphites.

1. It happened the first time in 1 Samuel 23:19.

2. It happened again in 1 Samuel 26:1.

I. God's man asks for help (1-2).

A. David saw himself as needy.

B. David saw God as sufficient.

II. God's man admits why he needs help (3-5).

A. David describes his problem (3).

B. David describes his God (4).

1. He is my help.

2. He is the one who sustains me.

C. David turns his problem over to God (5).

III. God's man anticipates his response to God's help (6-7).

A. David states what he will do (6).

1. He plans to glorify God by giving to Him.

2. He plans to glorify God by praising His name.

B. David states what God has done (7).

1. He has delivered me.

2. He has given me victory over my enemies.

Make It Personal: Do you have any Ziphites in your life?

1. Make sure God is the gravitational center of your life.

2. Make sure God's Son is the object of your trust.

There's an identity crisis in our country and Father's Day is a good time to talk about it. There's a tremendous need for men who will be *men*, God's kind of men.

But herein lies the problem. What does a real man look like? With the increasing scarcity of role models few seem to know.

Erma Bombeck portrays the confusion about the role of men, specifically the role of fathers. She paints a portrait of a little girl who loved her dad but wasn't sure what dads do:

One morning my father didn't get up and go to work. He went to the hospital and died the next day. I hadn't thought that much about him before. He was just someone who left and came home and seemed glad to see everyone at night. He opened the jar of pickles when no one else could. He was the only one in the house who wasn't afraid to go into the basement by himself.

He cut himself shaving, but no one kissed it or got excited about it. It was understood when it rained, he got the car and brought it around to the door. When anyone was sick, he went out to get the prescription filled. He took lots of pictures . . . but he was never in them.

Whenever I played house, the mother doll had a lot to do. I never knew what to do with the daddy doll, so I had him say, "I'm going off to work now," and threw him under the bed. The funeral was in our living room and a lot of people came and brought all kinds of good food and cakes. We had never had so much company before. I went to my room and felt under the bed for the daddy doll. When I found him, I dusted him off and put him on my bed. He never did anything. I didn't know his leaving would hurt so much (*Family -- The Ties that Bind . . and Gag!* New York : Fawcett Books, 1988, p. 2).[\[1\]](#)

So again, I ask the question. What does a *real man*, God's kind of man, look like?

I'd like to pose a candidate for our consideration. The man I have in mind loved the outdoors and spent much of his youth under the open skies tending sheep. One time a lion grabbed one of his lambs and took off with it. He went after the lion, struck it, and rescued his helpless sheep. The lion turned on him and he seized it by its hair, struck it again, and killed it. On another occasion he did the same thing with a bear. I say *he* did it, but actually by his own admission he had help, a point he made clear when sharing the story in an interview with his king: "The LORD... delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear..."[\[2\]](#)

On another occasion he took on a fearsome nine-feet-tall warrior that mocked his God and said he was going to feed him to the birds. Our man fired a stone from a slingshot that sunk into the giant blasphemer's head and killed him, and then cut off his opponent's head using his own sword. Again, by his own subsequent testimony he defeated his enemy by the power of God.

But our candidate for the *man's man* award was more than a brave outdoorsman and fearless fighter. He was also a lover of music. He wrote songs, dozens and dozens of them. He played his songs and sang them. He even taught others to sing.

Later this shepherd, warrior, and song writer became a king, perhaps the greatest king his country ever knew. And he approached leading his country the same way he tended his little flock as a teenager. In fact, that's one of the reasons God chose this man to be the king of His chosen nation, as Psalm 78:70-72 explains: "He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them."

Yes, David was a *man's man*. And the Scriptures make it clear that he was *God's kind of man*.

How can you tell if someone is God's kind of person? It's not merely by looking at what they do when things are going well in life. It's much more apparent by how they respond when things *aren't* going so well in life, particularly when they've been wronged.

If you don't have problems or problem-people in your life, this message isn't for you. You won't appreciate what you're about to see. But if you have problems and if you do have problem-people in your life, then Psalm 54 is for you!

[Read Psalm 54]

David wrote Psalm 54. The superscription tells us four pieces of background information. First, David said it was...

For the director of music. God wanted Israel to sing as a part of their worship of Him, just as He does today.

David wrote this psalm about an experience he had as a young man, but later after he became Israel's king, he put this song in the music director's hands so it could be taught to the rest of God's people. It was sung...

With stringed instruments. Charles Spurgeon observed, "Monotony is often the death of congregational praise."[\[3\]](#) Out of the 150 psalms seven of them were designed for stringed accompaniment (Ps. 4, 6, 54, 55, 61, 67, & 76). That is, the Levites (Israel's worship leaders) were to play "a plucked musical instrument" (that's what the Hebrew word means; the Jewish harp probably had a banjo sound) as the people sang these particular prayer-songs.

A maskil of David. We're not sure what this Hebrew word means. The NIV footnote suggests it's a literary or musical term. Others suggest it means "instruction" which would indicate this psalm was used to teach God's people, in this case, about the God-honoring way to respond to betrayal.

Psalm 54 is one of the fourteen psalms of David that provide the historical setting that brought it about. In this case...

When the Ziphites had gone to Saul and said, "Is not David hiding among us?" David penned this psalm after being betrayed...

Background: David was betrayed by the Ziphites.

Who were the Ziphites? They were Jews who lived in the Desert of Ziph which is located south of Hebron in the tribe of Judah. Let that sink in. The Ziphites were from David's own tribe and they ratted on him, not once but twice.

1. *It happened the first time in 1 Samuel 23:19.* At the beginning of 1 Samuel 23 David found out that the Philistines were looting the border town of Keilah in Judah. At the time David was fleeing for his life from King Saul who wanted to kill him, but after consulting the Lord David led his band of six hundred men to attack the Philistines and rescue the town of Keilah (1-6). Shortly after this David found out that the townspeople in Keilah planned to show their gratitude to David by turning him over to Saul (7-12). So David and his men left Keilah and went into hiding in the Desert of Ziph (14), some twenty-five miles south of Bethlehem, David's hometown.

David went to Horesh in the Desert of Ziph where two things happened (14). One, he found out that Saul was nearby and intent on killing him. And two, Jonathan showed up "and helped him find strength in God" (16). That meant things got easier for David, right? Wrong. The Ziphites got involved.[\[4\]](#)

1 Samuel 23:19-20 "The Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, 'Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon? Now, O king, come down whenever it pleases you to do so, and we will be responsible for handing him over to the king.'"

Saul was thrilled by their offer and told the Ziphites that since David was crafty, they should study his movements carefully, send a detailed report to the king, and then wait for Saul to arrive and apprehend the villain, David. As it turned out, just as Saul and his forces were about to capture David, Saul got word of a Philistine invasion and had to leave.

David's safety would be short-lived because the Ziphites weren't done.

2. *It happened again in 1 Samuel 26:1.* In chapter 25 David fled to the Desert of Maon (1) where he met Nabal and Abigail, a woman he eventually married (42). We meet the Ziphites again at the beginning of chapter 26: "The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, 'Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?'" Consequently, Saul led 3,000 troops back to the Desert of Ziph in search of David. In the middle of the night David went into Saul's camp and showed his loyalty to the sleeping king by taking his spear and water jug but leaving him unharmed. After he woke up Saul acknowledged his sin against David, and left. But his sorrow would be short-lived.

Out of that situation David wrote a prayer-song, Psalm 54. He'd been betrayed, first by the people of Keilah and

then twice by the Ziphites.

Psalm 54 is short and to the point. Commentator Eric Lane remarks, “This short, disjointed, rather breathless composition reflects the emergency during which it was composed.”^[5]

James Boice writes, “This is a psalm for anyone who feels abandoned, rejected, or betrayed. Have you been abandoned by a husband or wife, or by your children? Have you been publicly denounced by someone you thought was your close ally and friend? Do you feel that no one is on your side, that no one cares for you? You need to do what David did and turn to God. In this psalm we see what that means and how David did it.”^[6]

What’s the God-pleasing way for a man (and ladies too!) to respond to the pain of betrayal? Let’s learn from David’s example in Psalm 54 where he did three things.

I. God’s man asks for help (1-2).

“Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might. Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth.”

It’s a common theme of jokes that men don’t like to ask for help. I find it striking that God’s man David did. And for two reasons.

A. David saw himself as needy. Listen to the verbs by which he brings his personal requests to God: *save me... vindicate me... hear me... listen to me...* A proud man doesn’t ask for help, but one who admits his deficiency does. David saw himself as *needy*. Furthermore...

B. David saw God as sufficient. Note the basis of David’s bold requests: Save me *by your name*. Vindicate me *by your might*.

Names don’t mean much to us but they did for Old Testament saints. A person’s name often summed up the character and nature of the person with that name. In this psalm David finds great hope in God’s covenant name, *Yahweh* (also pronounced Jehovah).

Watch how David prolongs mentioning God’s name in the psalm, thus emphasizing its importance. “Save me, O God, *by your name*,” he begins in verse 1. But he doesn’t use God’s name yet, not until verse 6. In verse 1 he calls him *Elohim* (God). It’s *Elohim* again in verse 2 and in verse 3 and in verse 4. At the end of verse 4 he goes a step further, referring to God as ‘the Lord’ (*Adonai*). But it’s not until verse 6 that he names the name! “I will praise your name, O *Yahweh*, for it is good.”

Yahweh was the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses and the Israelites in Exodus 3:14. “I AM WHO I AM. Tell them ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Boice observes, “Scholars are divided on the exact meaning of the name *Jehovah*, but that is only because it is so great and so encompassing that nothing we can say ever seems to do it justice.”^[7]

The name *Yahweh* comes from the Hebrew verb *to be*. Boice explains, “It is in the present tense, of course. So it reveals God as the eternal present, as one who has always existed and who will always exist, the unchangeable God. Eternal existence also implies self-existence and self-sufficiency. Self-existence means that God has no origins and is therefore answerable to no one. Self-sufficiency means that God depends on no one and therefore has no needs. God helps those who call on him, but he needs no help himself.”^[8]

Here’s a great key to the Christian life. We must see ourselves as *needy* and God as *sufficient*. We must learn to view our needs as wonderful opportunities to magnify God’s sufficiency. David was in his early twenties when he learned this lesson as a result of the betrayal of the Ziphites. Many years later, another David who faced hardship,

David Brainerd, wrote about the same truth.

David Brainerd was born in Haddam, Connecticut in 1718. He was orphaned at fourteen and came to know Christ as his Savior at the age of 21. Shortly after, he enrolled at Yale, but was expelled his junior year for saying of a college tutor, “*He has no more grace than this chair.*” The episode grieved Brainerd, but some two months later, on his 24th birthday, he wrote in his journal, “...*I hardly ever so longed to live to God and to be altogether devoted to Him; I wanted to wear out my life in his service and for his glory ...*”^[9]

And wear out his life for the glory of God is just what Brainerd did! He became a missionary to the Indians in New England. I’ll tell you how God used him momentarily.

So here’s the first mark of God’s kind of man. God’s man asks for help, for help from the *Sufficient One, God Himself*. The fact is, we are needy because we do not have what it takes to respond in a God-pleasing way to our problems on our own. That’s true whether we admit it or not. The question is, do we admit it, to ourselves and to God? Do we ask for His help? Do we call on Him? Is it the pattern of our lives? Some seventy-three psalms are attributed to David and in nearly all of them he does what we see him doing here—he calls on God. Are you a person who calls on God?

II. God’s man admits why he needs help (3-5).

For David the reason was clear. Verse 3—“Strangers are attacking me; ruthless men seek my life—men without regard for God. *Selah*”^[10] Note how...

A. David describes his problem (3). Actually, his *problem people*, the Ziphites. He calls them three things, first *strangers*. “Strangers are attacking me.” The Ziphites may be Israelites but they’re surely not acting like it. They’re *strangers*, says David. A true brother wouldn’t treat his kin this way.

Secondly, they are *ruthless men*. The Ziphites were opportunists. They didn’t care about justice. They didn’t care about David. And they certainly didn’t care about God, as we’ll see in a moment. All they cared about was self. They were willing to betray an innocent man like David in order to ‘butter up’ Saul.

Thirdly, they profess to know God but they have *no regard for God*. To use contemporary language, they may go to church on Sunday but God is far from their thinking on Monday at the office or Tuesday evening at the ball field.

All of us have problems in life and at times problem-people. For David it was the Ziphites. Maybe your problem is a conflict with a father-in-law, or a spouse, or a child. Perhaps it’s a financial crunch. It could be a boss that takes advantage of you. Maybe it’s a person you thought was your friend who let you down. And you’re hurting.

It’s okay to admit it, to yourself and to God. Admit why you need God’s help.

Verse 3 ends with *Selah*. Eric Lane suggests selah indicates an interval or key change took place at this point in the psalm. For sure, the tone changes in verse 4, “Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.” After describing his problem...

B. David describes his God (4). He affirms two wonderful truths about God.

1. *He is my help.* Not *was* but *is*. And not someone else’s help but *my* help. David didn’t live in the past. God was real in his life in the present. *Surely God is my help.* What’s more...

2. *He is the one who sustains me.* The KJV says, “The Lord is with them that uphold my soul.” The fact that God sustains His servant implies that He allows the opposition to continue. Sometimes God makes our problems go away, but more typically He *sustains us in them* by giving us grace to endure.

Spurgeon says it well, “None can praise the Lord so well as those who have tried and proved the preciousness of his name in seasons of adversity.”[\[11\]](#)

God is my help, David says. He is personally involved sustaining my life. He is bigger than the Ziphites. He’s bigger than Saul and his army. He’s bigger than any opponent I’ll ever face.

We find a wonderful promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

After describing his problem in verse 3 and then describing his God in verse 4...

C. David turns his problem over to God (5). “Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them.”

David isn’t being vindictive here. If you doubt that, just remember that on two occasions David had opportunity to kill Saul but didn’t, and in fact felt remorse for merely cutting a piece of fabric off of Saul’s robe. No, David isn’t attacking those who were attacking him. Instead, he’s praying about them, and in his prayer he’s turning them over to God, knowing that God who is just will deal justly with them.

Matthew Henry explains, “This is not a prayer of malice, but a prayer of faith; for it has an eye to the word of God, and only desires the performance of that. There is truth in God’s threatenings as well as in his promises, and sinners that repent not will find it so to their cost.”[\[12\]](#)

David believed in “the boomerang effect of sin.”[\[13\]](#) He knew Numbers 32:23, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” Paul would later put it this way in Galatians 6:7-8, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

Do you believe in the *boomerang effect of sin*? When you throw a boomerang, it’s coming back. Have you ever admitted to God your most basic problem, that you’re a sinner, that your sins are an offense to Him who is holy, and that you deserve to reap destruction for what you have sown? Have you ever done that? Have you come to grips with the *boomerang effect of sin*?

Is there a place you can go to escape the boomerang effect of sin? Yes! Hide behind the cross of Jesus. Two thousand years ago God’s perfect Son took the boomerang effect of sin in the place of every sinner that would ever believe on Him. The destruction that was due to rebel sinners *He took*, in the place of the undeserving rebel sinners. And God accepts rebel sinners and makes them His own children on the basis of His perfect Son’s life, death, and resurrection.

Have you ever *turned your problem over to God*? Your sin problem, that is. Have you ever trusted Jesus Christ to deliver you from the impending danger caused by your sin? You can today. Rom 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through.”

But don’t stop there. If you have turned your sin problem over to God, then do this. Turn all of your problems over to God, including your problem people, as David did in Psalm 54.

What does a *real man* look like, God’s kind of man? One, God’s man asks for help. Two, God’s man admits why he needs help. And three...

III. God’s man anticipates his response to God’s help (6-7).

Hear David’s resolve in verse 6, “I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you; I will praise your name, O LORD, for it

is good."

A. David states what he will do (6). Did you catch the future tense verbs? *I will...I will...* David spells out ahead of time what he is going to do once God takes care of the Ziphite problem. He plans to glorify God in two very practical ways.

1. *He plans to glorify God by giving to Him.* "I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you." God required the Jews to bring certain offerings to Him, such as the guilt offering. But others were voluntary, such as the 'freewill offering' (Lev 7:12). You gave them not because you *had* to but *wanted* to.

By the way, does the Bible teach 'freewill'? Sure it does. The word appears twenty-two times in the Bible, all in the Old Testament and all referring to the freewill offering. The Bible is clear that man is free to do what he *wants* to do. And what does a sinful man *want* to do? He wants to go his own way and rule his own life (Isa 53:6). He wants to sin and follow the ways of the world (Eph. 2:1-2). And what he does *not* want to do is seek God and submit to God (Rom. 3:10-12). Left to his own freewill, no sinner would ever seek God.

Thankfully, because God is rich in mercy He didn't leave us in the hopeless bondage of our self-centered free wills. In His grace He seeks helpless sinners! By the power of His Spirit He sets sinners free and makes them new in Christ Jesus. And what does a *free* man, a *new* man want to do? He wants to live God's way (Psalm 1). He wants to please God (2 Cor. 5:9). Simply stated, he wants to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31).

While the Ziphites are on his tail, David is already making plans for how he is going to glorify God after God intervenes. First, he's going to go to the House of God and give Him a freewill offering, an expression of his heartfelt thanks. But that's not all... 2. *He plans to glorify God by praising His name.* "I will praise your name, O Yahweh, for it is good." I'm going to sing about You, Lord. I'm going to bring attention to Your good name with my voice. And David did! He wrote Psalm 54 and gave it to his fellow Israelites so they, too, could praise Yahweh!

I mentioned earlier that David Brainerd at the age of twenty-four wrote in his journal, "I want to wear out my life in his service and for his glory." That didn't take long, for Brainerd died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-nine in the house of Jonathan Edwards.

Thankfully, though his life was short Brainerd's influence continues today through his journals. Listen to what he had to say about the importance of living of the glory of God[\[14\]](#):

"There is but one thing that deserves our highest care and most ardent desires; and that is, that we may answer the great end for which we were made, viz. to glorify that God, who has given us our being and all our comforts, and do all the good we possibly can to our fellow man, while we live in the world. Verily life is not worth the having, if it be not improved for this noble end and purpose. Yet, alas, how little is this thought of among mankind! Most men seem to live to themselves without much regard to the glory of God, or the good of their fellow creatures. They earnestly desire, and eagerly pursue after the riches, the honours, and the pleasures of life, as if they really supposed, that wealth, or greatness, or merriment could make their immortal souls happy. But alas! what false and delusive dreams are these!"[\[15\]](#)

The way David finishes Psalm 54 is quite significant. After stating what he plans to do in verse 6...

B. David states what God has done (7). "For he has delivered me from all my troubles, and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes." Notice the verb David uses. He doesn't say God *will deliver* him, but God *has delivered*. It's past tense.

1. *He has delivered me.* And it's not, "My eyes *will look in triumph*," but...

2. *He has given me victory over my enemies.* David is so sure that God is listening and will come through that he uses past tense language. That's assurance!

Make It Personal: Do you have any Ziphites in your life?

If so, don't wish them away. Learn from David. Be God's kind of person. How?

1. *Make sure God is the gravitational center of your life.* In other words, don't just 'tack God on' to your life. Put Him at the center. Resolve to glorify Him.

That raises the question, how do we, in practical terms, glorify God in our daily lives? Once again, David Brainerd can help us. He offers five very practical 'directions' (as he called them)—we might use the term guidelines—for how to glorify God.

1. Resolve upon and daily endeavor to practice a life of seriousness and strict sobriety.
2. Be careful to make a good improvement of precious time. When you cease from labor, fill up your time in reading, meditation, and prayer; and while your hands are laboring, let your heart be employed, as much as possible, in divine thoughts.
3. Take heed that you faithfully perform the business which you have to do in the world, from a regard to the commands of God; and not from an ambitious desire of being esteemed better than others.
4. Never expect any satisfaction or happiness from the world. If you hope for happiness in the world, hope for it from God.
5. Never think that you can live to God by your own power or strength; but always look to, and rely on him for assistance, yea for all strength and grace... Indeed we are a long time in learning, that all our strength and salvation, is in God.[\[16\]](#)

It all boils down to this. If you want to live for the glory of God...

2. *Make sure God's Son is the object of your trust.* Make sure you can say with David, "Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me."

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[\[11\]](#) Dave Simmons, *Dad, the Family Coach*, Victor Books, 1991.

[\[2\]](#) 1 Samuel 17:37

[\[3\]](#) Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, p. 440.

[\[4\]](#) Saul has been doing a smear campaign against David, spreading the story that David is a threat to the throne and security of the country.

[\[5\]](#) Eric Lane , p. 245.

[\[6\]](#) James Boice, p. 453.

[\[7\]](#) James Boice, p. 455.

[\[8\]](#) James Boice, p. 455.

[\[9\]](#) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Brainerd

[\[10\]](#) David said nearly the same thing in Psalm 86:14.

[\[11\]](#) Spurgeon, p. 441.

[\[12\]](#) Henry, M. (1996, c1991). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible*

[\[13\]](#) Observation by Willem VanGemeren, *Psalms*, p. 391.

[\[14\]](#) Interestingly, like David the author of Psalm 54, David Brainerd was in his twenties at the time.

[\[15\]](#) Richard Hasler, *Journey with David Brainerd*, p. 32.

[\[16\]](#) Richard Hasler, *Journey with David Brainerd*, pp. 32-33.