



# God Judges between David and Saul

1 Samuel 24



## LESSON GOAL

Students will understand that God's Word is the standard of right and wrong.

## BIBLE TRUTHS

- David trusted God in his relationship with Saul.
- Saul tried to kill David rather than trusting God.
- David obeyed God's Word and Saul did not.

## KEY VERSE

"Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed'" (1 Samuel 24:10).

## APPLICATION

- Learn God's Word to learn what is right and wrong.
- Never disobey the Bible's instruction.
- Obey God with all your heart.

## NEXT WEEK

God Makes David King  
Read 2 Samuel 1:1–2:4a.

### Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group



## PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

*“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).*

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

### Bible Background

#### David on the Run: Overview of 1 Samuel 21–23

Even before Saul’s hatred for David was revealed to Jonathan, David already had been forced to flee and hide from Saul. Jonathan’s report of his father’s fury and attempt to kill his own son left David no choice but to permanently leave Saul’s presence. David had become a “wanted man.” In an attempt to protect himself from Saul, David fled west into Philistine-controlled territory (1 Sam. 21:10–15) and then east into Moab (22:3–4). During this time, 400 (and later 600) Israelites gathered around David’s leadership (22:1–2; 23:13). While Saul was busy killing the Lord’s priests for helping David (21:1–9; 22:6–20), David was listening to the Lord’s commands and rescued the Israelite city of Keilah from the Philistines (23:1–13).

Saul was devoted to the destruction of David. He tried to trap David in Keilah, but God warned David that the city would turn him over to Saul (1 Sam. 23:1–13). David fled to the wilderness area directly west of the Dead Sea, where “Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand” (23:14). While Saul was hunting David, Jonathan and David met again and confirmed their covenant. Jonathan encouraged David that both he and his father knew that David would become king (23:16–18). David had several narrow escapes from Saul until Saul was called away to rescue Israel from Philistine invaders (23:19–29). David took the opportunity to flee to En Gedi, an oasis on the western shore of the Dead Sea. The area was surrounded by caves, which were good places for David and his men to hide.

#### David’s Opportunity to Kill Saul (1 Sam. 24:1–7)

As soon as Saul was finished with the Philistines, he returned to his pursuit of David (1 Sam. 24:1). When he heard that David was at En Gedi, he took 3,000 men to find him (24:2). Saul’s obsession with killing David revealed his heart. He never submitted to God’s authority. When there had been opportunity for his kingdom to continue, Saul flippantly disregarded God’s commands (13:13). But now that God had given his kingdom to a neighbor (15:28), Saul passionately sought to preserve his reign. Like a man grasping after wind, Saul futilely tried to supersede God’s plan. God was sovereign over both Saul’s anointing as king and his rejection. God was even sovereign over Saul’s most mundane human activity—going to the bathroom! No doubt when Saul entered a sheepfold and wandered past the entrance to a cave in the back to find a safe, quiet place to relieve himself (24:3), he had no idea that his steps were being directed by God.

David and his men, who were hiding in the back of that same cave, must have been equally surprised at God’s sovereign plan! Alone and vulnerable, the hunter had become the prey. Believing that the situation had been promised by the Lord

in a previous prophecy, David's men challenged David to seize the opportunity (1 Sam. 24:4). Instead of taking Saul's life, David snuck to Saul's side and cut off the corner of his robe. To the fugitive army, David was not doing enough to combat Saul (24:7). However, David believed he already had done wrong: "David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe" (24:5). David had done more than destroy property. By cutting off a corner of his robe, David was challenging Saul's authority. Like taking someone's crown or toppling one's throne, David's action demonstrated Saul's incompetence to rule.

David regretted cutting Saul's robe and did not do anything more severe because he knew that Saul was the Lord's anointed (24:6). The Lord had put Saul into authority. To assault Saul's leadership was to assault the Lord's leadership. David even referred to Saul as his master. Even though David knew God's will was that he would become king, he was not willing to accomplish the Lord's plan through his own disobedience. The Lord's will was more important to David than his own exaltation. While his men saw this as a golden opportunity to take Saul's life, David trusted the Lord's ability to accomplish His own will. David did not allow his men to take action, and Saul left the cave without knowing the danger he had been in.

### **David's Evidence for His Innocence (1 Sam. 24:8–11)**

Before Saul had gone very far, David stopped him and pleaded his innocence before him. In order to get Saul's attention and show his loyalty to the Lord's anointed, David called out, "My lord the king!" (1 Sam. 24:8). When Saul looked around, he saw David bowing before him. David tried to convince Saul that his evaluation of him as a usurper was wrong (24:9). Even when God had brought Saul to such a vulnerable place, and even when David's men had urged him to kill Saul, David was not willing to harm the Lord's anointed (24:10). David used the corner of Saul's robe as evidence of how close he had been to Saul. How easy it would have been to kill him! But David could not. He said, "There is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you" (24:11). David's desire to please the Lord directed his actions.

### **David's Confidence in the Lord's Judgment (1 Sam. 24:12–15)**

If David was innocent as he proclaimed, then Saul was wrongly using his power to hunt the innocent. David briefly accused Saul of wrongdoing: "Yet you hunt my life to take it" (1 Sam. 24:11). But instead of lingering on Saul's wickedness, David switched his focus to the Lord. The Lord would judge between Saul and David. David would not allow himself to take the Lord's right to avenge (24:12). Because his actions were innocent, David could boldly say, "Wickedness proceeds from the wicked" (24:13). While David's heart was right, Saul's wicked pursuit of David proceeded from his wicked heart. David asked why the powerful king of Israel would waste his time (and commit the wickedness) of pursuing a "dead dog," a "flea" (24:14). David was a committed and lowly subject, not a threat. Once again, David announced that he was trusting in the Lord to judge between them (24:15). Because he was living according to God's Law, David had confidence that God would take his side and deliver him. Unlike Saul, David was not willing to usurp God's role.

### **David's Innocence Admitted by Saul (1 Sam. 24:16–22)**

After affirming that it actually was David who was speaking to him, "Saul lifted up his voice and wept" (1 Sam. 24:16). David's righteousness in permitting Saul to live shocked him. The whole event confronted Saul with the fact that David was different from him. David rewarded evil with good, while Saul rewarded good

with evil (24:17). Any normal man would have killed his enemy in such a situation (24:19); Saul knew what he would have done. But David was different from other men. David would not view God's sovereignly directed opportunity as justification for wickedness (24:18). Even Saul, while hating the fact that David would replace him as king, knew that the Lord would reward David. Saul admitted that David would become king and that the kingdom would be established in his hand (24:20).

Probably not knowing that David had already covenanted with Jonathan, Saul asked David to swear not to kill his descendants or destroy Saul's family name (1 Sam. 24:21). David promised what Saul requested. Although Saul relented of his pursuit of David, David knew Saul too well to think that Saul's weeping was repentance (24:22). Before long, Saul was once again hunting David.

### Conclusion

First Samuel 24 exemplifies the difference between Saul and David. Saul had been rejected by God because he ignored the Lord's commands (1 Sam. 15:23). His submission to God's will was always partial. Saul would offer a sacrifice to God but not offer it as God commanded (1 Sam. 13). He would destroy the Amalekites but not completely destroy them (1 Sam. 15). Because Saul did not fear the Lord, he felt justified in fashioning his own form of obedience. Such obedience is really rebellion.

Although he was a sinner, David was not like Saul. David did not sinfully presume that God's promise of his future kingship would make killing Saul acceptable. He did not justify killing Saul even when the Lord directed Saul into such a compromising situation. He did not buckle under pressure from his men, who were urging him to kill Saul. He did not succumb to the hardships of doing things the Lord's way, which included hiding out in caves and being pursued by a deranged and demon-oppressed father-in-law who had given David's wife to another man (1 Sam. 25:44). He did not think of the ease, the rest, the success, the wealth, or the power which would be his when he became king. He did not even justify sin by saying that God would be glorified. David feared God. To David, being pleasing to the Lord was worth more than any supposed rewards from killing Saul. David was a man after God's own heart. He was committed to doing the Lord's work in the Lord's way.

## POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth" (Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



### Review Questions

*Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.*

Why did Saul first become angry at David?

*When coming back from war, the women sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." This made Saul jealous because David was liked more than he was.*

What did Saul try to do to David because of his jealousy?  
*When David came to play his harp for Saul, Saul threw two spears at David, trying to kill him.*

What did David do because of his fear of Saul?  
*David left and hid from Saul.*

What did Jonathan and David do to find out whether Saul was truly angry at David?  
*David missed a banquet for two days, and Saul became very angry. Saul was so angry that he tried to kill his own son. Jonathan told David of his father's plan.*

Why was it so hard for Jonathan and David to say goodbye?  
*Jonathan and David loved each other. They knew that they would miss each other very much.*



### **Tie Thief!**

Materials: used, inexpensive tie; scissors

Directions: Instruct an adult classroom assistant to sneak up while you are giving announcements to the class, cut off the bottom part of your tie, and sneak away unnoticed. You should pretend not to notice.



### **An Opportunity to Sin**

In this week's lesson, David has the perfect opportunity to kill King Saul, who is himself seeking to kill David. David does not take the opportunity because he does not want to sin. This is a very difficult choice to make and yet a very wise one. Give the students an instruction to sit still and not to talk, and then leave the room for a short while. The students will no doubt have found it very difficult to obey your instructions. Explain to them that David faced an even harder test but chose to be obedient and so showed himself to be a righteous king who would love and obey God.



### **Capture the Robe**

In today's lesson, David manages to cut off a piece of Saul's robe without him even knowing it. Blindfold one of the students and attach a piece of ribbon to his back. Select another student to attempt to remove or cut the ribbon without being caught. The blindfolded student must shout out, "Gotcha!" when he thinks or feels the ribbon is being removed.



### **Making Right Choices**

Before the lesson begins, tell a story about an imaginary child. Develop an age-appropriate scenario where the student has the opportunity to do something he knows he should not do. Stop the story before telling whether the child will sin. After the lesson about David sparing Saul's life, conclude your story about the imaginary child. Use the scenario to help the students apply the lesson.

## PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

*“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).*

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

### Bible Lesson

King Saul had come to hate David, and David was forced to run and hide from him. First, David ran to the Philistines’ territory, and from there he went to the land of Moab. The people of Israel had heard that Saul was trying to kill David, and some of them sided with David. There were about 400 men helping David hide from Saul. One time, Saul found out that one of the Lord’s priests had helped David, and he had him killed for it. But David was listening to what the Lord commanded him to do, and the Lord was protecting him. The Lord even used David to rescue an Israelite city from the Philistines while he was running from Saul. But God told him that he must leave that city because the people would turn him over to Saul, even though he had saved them. David was listening to the Lord’s commands, and God was protecting him.

Saul was not obeying the Lord. He was determined to find David and kill him. David had run to the wilderness near the Dead Sea, and Saul was not far behind him. David had to keep moving from one hiding place to another because Saul was so close to finding him. But God gave him a special blessing. His best friend Jonathan found him, and they had a chance to talk. They reminded each other of the promise they had made to each other before, and Jonathan told David that he and Saul both knew that David would become the king. David was very encouraged by his visit with his friend. Although Saul nearly harmed David on several occasions, God always protected him. During this time, Saul had to leave to go fight the Philistines. David took the chance while Saul was away to find a new place. He and the men who were siding with him went to a place called En Gedi. En Gedi was an oasis on the shore of the Dead Sea. There were a lot of caves there where they could hide.

When Saul finished his battle with the Philistines, he went back to his search for David. Someone told Saul that David was at En Gedi, and Saul went right away. He took 3,000 men with him so that David wouldn’t have any chance to get away. Saul’s obsession with killing David showed what was in his heart. He knew that God would make David king, but he would not submit to God’s authority. He had disobeyed God’s commands since he had become king and had not changed. Saul thought he was better than God and that he could beat God. But, of course, he was wrong. God controls everything. That is called God’s sovereignty. God is sovereign over the smallest things. While Saul was out looking for David near the caves of En Gedi, he needed to go to the bathroom. He found a cave and went inside so that he could have some privacy. He had no idea that his steps were being directed by God, because he chose the very cave that David and his men were hiding in. This was a very big cave, and they were hiding far in the back. Saul didn’t know that they were there. David and his men were very surprised to see Saul wander into their cave! David’s men thought for sure that this was God’s way

of giving David the opportunity to kill Saul. They challenged him to sneak up to Saul and kill him. David did sneak up to Saul, but instead of killing him, he cut off a small part of Saul's robe. Saul had no idea that David was there, much less that he had cut off part of his robe! David's army was upset that he had not killed Saul, but David wasn't. In fact, he was upset that he had done anything at all. He felt guilty for cutting Saul's robe. He realized that by doing so, he was challenging Saul's authority. He knew that even though Saul was wicked, he was God's anointed. God had made Saul the king, and David knew that God should be the one who challenged Saul's authority. This had been a seemingly perfect opportunity to kill Saul; David would have become king right then and there. But David was not willing to disobey God to become the king. He trusted God and waited on His timing.

After Saul left the cave, David felt bad because of what he had done. Before Saul got very far away, David came out and called to him. He said, "My lord the king!" Saul looked around and saw David bowing before him. David begged Saul to realize that he was innocent, that he had not done anything wrong against Saul, and that Saul should stop trying to kill him. To prove to Saul that he was not trying to kill him so he could take the kingdom, David showed him the piece of robe that he had cut off. He told him that he had the opportunity to kill him while he was in the cave, but he didn't!

David then accused Saul of sinning before the Lord. He told him that he was trying to kill an innocent man, and that was a wicked thing to do. He said that God would judge the two of them, and God would decide who was the wicked one and who was the righteous one. Because he was living according to God's law, David had confidence that God would take his side and deliver him. Unlike Saul, David was not willing to try to take God's authority.

When Saul realized that it was David, he yelled out and cried. He was shocked that David had the chance to kill him and didn't. He knew that he wouldn't have done the same thing. Everything that had happened showed Saul how wicked he was and how righteous David was. Saul knew he was defeated at that point. He knew that God would reward David's righteousness and make him the king. He asked David to swear that he would not kill his family members or destroy his family name. David promised that he would not. Saul left David alone. David knew Saul too well, though. He knew that even though he was crying and said he repented, Saul's heart had not changed. David got a short break from being hunted by Saul, but it wouldn't be long before Saul would be after him again.

This situation shows the great difference between Saul and David. Saul had been rejected by God because he ignored God's commands. Saul would obey only part of God's command and then would finish things the way he wanted to. That is really disobedience. David was a sinner, but nothing like Saul. David sought after God's commands, and obeyed God fully. He didn't kill Saul even though it would have been so easy. All the men around him were telling him to kill Saul, but he chose to listen to what God said, not what other people said. It was not easy for David to obey God. He had to leave his best friend Jonathan, live in caves, and be chased by Saul. But David feared God. He wanted to obey God more than he wanted anything else. David was a man after God's own heart.





## Lesson Questions

After running from Saul, where did David hide?

*David first went to the Philistines, then to the land of Moab, and then to the wilderness near the Dead Sea.*

Why was Saul chasing David?

*Saul was trying to kill David so that he would not become the next king of Israel.*

What happened when Saul entered the cave?

*When Saul came into the cave, David's men told David that he should kill Saul. They thought that this was an opportunity that God was giving David.*

Did David kill Saul?

*No; David would not kill Saul because Saul was God's chosen man as king. David knew that God would take care of Saul in His timing.*

What did David do to Saul while in the cave?

*David cut off the corner of Saul's robe.*

What did David do after Saul left the cave?

*David followed Saul out of the cave and told him what he had done. David said that although he had a chance to kill Saul, he did not. He also asked Saul why he was pursuing him.*

What did Saul say in response?

*Saul said that David was a better man than he was. If Saul had been given that chance, he would have killed David.*

## Presentation Ideas



### A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



### Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



### God Is My Judge

Materials: balance (borrow one from a science classroom at school or make one out of milk cartons and string); six weights (blocks, small cans, etc.); paper crown, index card, tape

Directions: Before class, set up the balance in the front of the classroom, equally balanced with three weights on each side. Label one pan "David" and the other pan "Saul." Write 1 Samuel 24:12—"Let the Lord judge between you and me"—on an index card, and tape it to the top of the balance. During class, explain that in this passage David is willing for God to be the judge between Saul and himself, and that you will be using this balance during the lesson to show whom God is going to exalt as king of Israel. As the lesson begins, point to one weight on Saul's pan. Explain that during 1 Samuel 21–23, Saul has been chasing David all over the wilderness, trying to kill him. Read 1 Samuel 24:1–2, and then point to the second weight and review how Saul hired 3,000 of the most skilled soldiers

to find and kill David. Read 1 Samuel 24:17, and then point to the third weight and emphasize that Saul rewarded David's good deeds with evil. As you teach through 1 Samuel 24:3–7, pick up the first block on David's pan and move it to Saul's pan. Remind the students that David had the opportunity to kill Saul, yet he didn't because he respected him as "the Lord's anointed." Pick up the second block from David's side and place it on top of the blocks on Saul's side while explaining that cutting a piece of Saul's robe troubled David's heart. At this point, the balance should be weighted down on Saul's side, and rising higher on David's side. Continue teaching from 1 Samuel 24:8–19. While instructing the students on 1 Samuel 24:20–22, pick up the third block on David's side and move it to Saul's pan. Emphasize that after Saul had tried to kill David multiple times, David was still willing to make an oath to preserve Saul's family and family name. At the end of the lesson, David's pan has risen high above Saul's. Take the paper crown and place it on David's pan while telling the students it is clear whom God has chosen to be the next king of Israel, and remind them that God is a just judge!

## Praise and Worship

*I Have Decided to Follow Jesus*

*Oh, Be Careful*

*The B-I-B-L-E*

*Trust and Obey*

*Thy Word*



## David Spares Saul

Very quickly David fled

*(Run in place.)*

From Saul, who wanted David dead.

*(Clench fists; make angry face.)*

He found a cave in which to hide.

*(Squat down like hiding in a cave)*

And, unaware, Saul came inside.

*(Point toward the cave entrance with shocked look)*

Saul's life was now in David's hands,

*(Hold out both hands, palms up.)*

But David knew the Lord's commands.

*(Point to temple; nod.)*

He cut a corner from Saul's coat.

*(Move two fingers in scissors motion.)*

To show he could have cut his throat.

*(Move index finger across throat.)*

We should trust God's timing, too,

*(Tap wrist to indicate watch.)*

Obeying what He says to do.  
(Place hands over heart; nod.)

## PRACTICE THE TRUTH

*“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).*

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



### God’s Word Rules

After the lesson, play a game with the class. Prepare easy questions that give the choice between right and wrong. Each one should be matched with a specific command from God’s Word. The focus should be on applying Scripture to situations students will face. For example, ask the students whether they should hurt someone who hurts them. After they answer, talk about Matthew 5:44, which says that we should love our enemies. Make the game competitive by allowing each student who answers correctly to move forward on a game board, earn points for his team, etc.



### Your Training

Ask the students what they would like to do when they grow up. Explain that right now, they are being trained to do the job God has planned for their lives. Introduce the idea that many things they don’t think of as training really are. You will need to come up with age-appropriate questions to spark their thinking. Ask them questions such as:

“How is getting along with a brother or sister training you?”

*(to get along with coworkers)*

“How does obeying your mom and dad train you?”

*(to be obedient to the Lord as an adult, to respect and obey the authority God places over them)*

Remind them to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord and to always do their best as they are training to live out the special plan God has just for them!



### Who Took the Robe?

Use this activity to review the memory verse. Use a piece of material to represent a piece of Saul’s robe. Have a teacher be Saul, standing over the cloth but not touching it. Because the cave is dark, “Saul” should close his eyes (or be blindfolded). The students, acting as David, try to steal the cloth by pulling it from under Saul without being tagged by him. If a student is tagged, he is out. To reenter the game, he must recite the memory verse. You could have one teacher or assistant who listens to memory verses and another who watches the students who are in the game.



### The Hearts of David and Saul

Materials: green hearts, red hearts, copies of the “Contrasting the Hearts of David and Saul” craft page

Directions: Give each student a red heart and a green heart. Have the students fold the two hearts in half and paste the two folded sides together to create a flip page. Glue the heart to the center of the craft page. The pictures of Saul and David can then be placed on the appropriate side. Ask students the following questions: "Which kind of heart do we want to have? If we want to have a heart like David's, how do we behave, think, and speak?" As a class, have students brainstorm characteristics of a heart like David and a heart like Saul. Review with the students how Saul's heart was full of jealousy, anger, hatred, and greed. This was contrasted with the heart of David (a man after God's own heart), who, while imperfect, was developing much patience, humility, wisdom, submissiveness, and trust in God. Encourage the students to take this craft home as a reminder to trust God this week. Explain that He is in charge of every challenge in our lives. If we trust Him, we can choose to have these character qualities and a heart like King David's.

### **Coloring Sheets**

Give each student the coloring sheets from the back of the lesson. Students can color the pages in class or at home.



### **MEMORY VERSE**

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding"  
(Proverbs 3:5–6).

# Contrasting the Hearts of David and Saul

Characteristics of David's Heart

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Glue heart here.

Characteristics of Saul's Heart

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Things I Want to Work on this Week

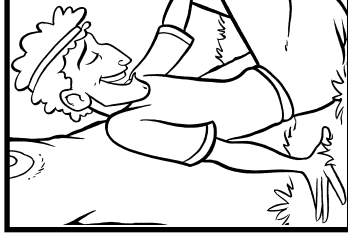
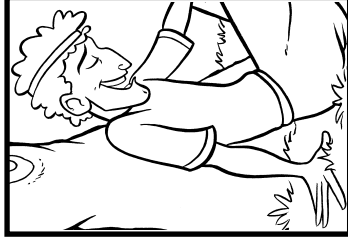
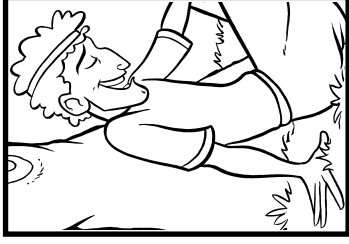
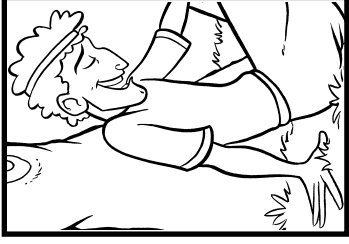
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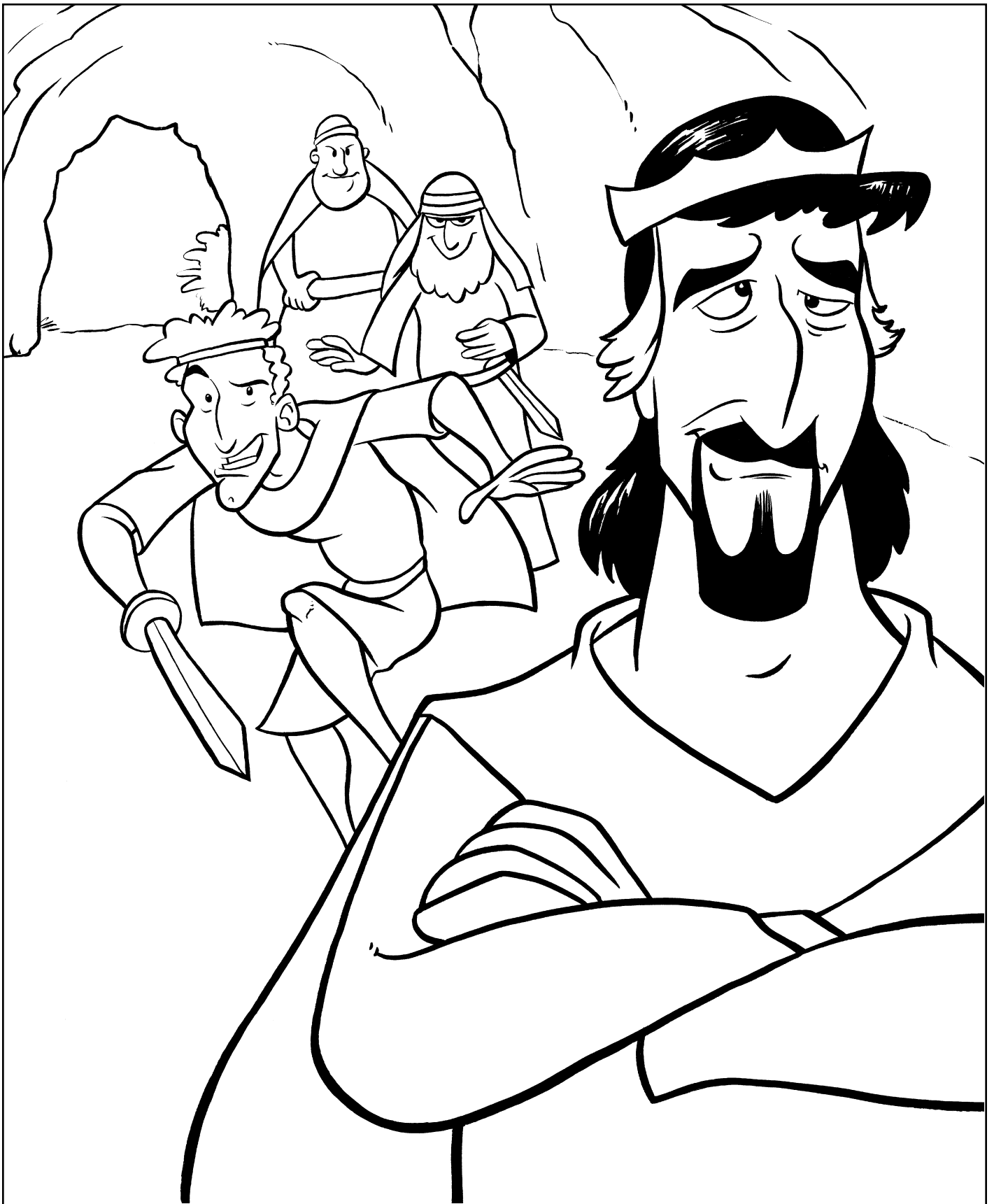


# Contrasting the Hearts of David and Saul









**“Then the men of David said to him, ‘This is the day of which the LORD said to you, ‘Behold I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.’” And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul’s robe”  
(1 Samuel 24:4).**





**“The LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave....I will not stretch out my hand against the LORD’s anointed” (1 Samuel 24:10).**

