

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

SAY: “In our last session, we looked at the strong friendships we can have in Christ. Today we look at how He expects everyone in a relationship with Him to respect all those He has placed in authority.” Invite members to turn to **page 3** in the **Personal Study Guide (PSG)** and review session titles.

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the picture (**PSG, p. 40**) as you introduce **Question #1: What are some ways you’ve been taught to show respect for authority?**

OPTION: Enlist two volunteers with smartphones to access a dictionary on the Internet and locate definitions for the words *respect* and *submission*. Call on the volunteers to read aloud the definitions. Briefly discuss how the definitions relate to this study and specific ways believers can demonstrate respectful submission to those who are in authority.

SESSION 3 RESPECT AUTHORITY



The Point

Respect the authorities God has placed in your life.

The Bible Meets Life

Most authority figures are good leaders whose authority we can respect. Unfortunately, we encounter other authority figures who, at best, are inept in what

they do or, at worst, are self-serving or even “out to get us.” When it comes to respect, the Bible makes no distinction between the two types of leaders. In the Book of 1 Samuel, David modeled for us how we can respect even the worst kinds of authority figures.

The Passage

1 Samuel 24:3-12

The Setting

As the previous chapter ended, David had narrowly escaped Saul as his men closed in on David. Advised that the Philistines had raided the homeland, Saul called off the pursuit to fight them. When Saul left abruptly to fight the Philistines, David took the opportunity to find a more secure location. Then without a hint as to how Saul fared in his latest Philistine scuffle, Saul headed back to the wilderness to resume chasing David.

1 Samuel 24:3-7

3 And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.

7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.

Act with grace toward those in authority.

Verse 3. Working on an informant's tip, Saul and a special force of 3,000 men scoured an area "in the wilderness of Engedi" among the precarious crags and caves known as "the rocks of the wild goats" (1 Sam. 24:1-2) to track down David. The area included steep mountains intersected by wadis running down in deep ravines to the Dead Sea, as well as many caverns and caves that would have provided hiding places for David and his men.

As Saul's men made their way through the rough terrain, they came to a series of **sheepcotes by the way**. These sheepfolds also included caves that provided excellent shelter from bad weather and protection from wild beasts.

1▶ Feeling the urge of nature, **Saul went in** one of the caves **to cover his feet**—to relieve himself privately. In Deuteronomy 23:12-14, the law provided for strict sanitary regulations, detailing that every soldier had to dig a hole and cover his excrement. So as Saul entered the cave, nobody—

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life (PSG, p. 41)**. Highlight the author's comments about the problem of disrespect in our culture.

Reinforce the importance of respecting our authorities by reading **The Point (PSG, p. 41): Respect the authorities God has placed in your life.**

PRAY: Begin the Bible study with prayer. Ask God to help us recognize and respect those He has placed in authority over us. Thank Him for the gift that each of them is to us.

STUDY THE BIBLE 1 Samuel 24:3-7

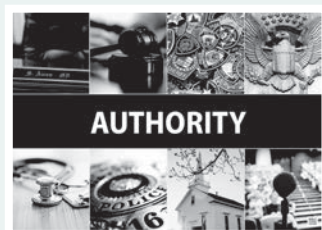


10 minutes

GUIDE: Before reading the passage, set the context by summarizing the information in **The Setting** on page 42.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 24:3-7.

LEADER PACK: Point to **Item 3: Authority.** Ask volunteers to point out what each symbol on the poster represents.



GUIDE: Use **Bible Commentary 1** on page 43 and this page to explain the euphemism “to cover his feet.” Saul’s vulnerability in such a situation should be obvious to all.

GUIDE: Use **Bible Commentary 2** on page 45 as well as **DIGGING DEEPER** on **PSG page 43** to give more background on “the Lord’s anointed” and why David took this matter so seriously.

not even his personal bodyguard—would have accompanied him, making him quite vulnerable.

Can you imagine being one of David’s men? Hiding out in one of the caves, you peer out to see Saul and his massive army coming directly your way. Then Saul comes into the very cave where you’ve taken cover. You scamper and crouch low to hide **in the sides of the cave.** As you grasp your weapons, you see Saul has come alone. And as he squats, you are relieved to find out why. ◀

Verse 4. David’s men, now brimming with confidence, **said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee.** They assured him Saul’s presence in the cave at that very moment surely signified a fulfillment of God’s promise to deliver Saul into David’s hands. Previously, when Samuel told Saul the Lord had rejected him as king of Israel, Saul grabbed Samuel’s robe and it tore. Samuel turned to declare that God would tear the kingship from Saul and hand it over to someone better (1 Sam. 15:26-28). Whether David’s men referred to this or simply interpreted these circumstances in David’s favor, they recognized a stroke of providence when they saw one. They pushed David to seize this opportunity to assassinate his adversary because, to them, God had obviously caused Saul to choose this place to relieve himself.

David remained unconvinced, yet saw it as an opportunity to make a statement. He crept stealthily toward the oblivious Saul, and **cut off** a portion of the edge of his robe. Saul’s robe would have had a distinctive fringe reserved only for the king, symbolizing his power and authority. By cutting off and taking **the skirt of Saul’s robe,** David had symbolically declared a revolt, since that signaled a transfer of power from one person to the other. Additionally, Saul’s robe no longer complied with the requirements of the law; therefore, David had essentially nullified Saul’s claim to be king.

Verse 5. David wisely had refused to interpret Saul’s stumbling into this particular cave as a sign from God to harm Saul as David’s men had insisted. Killing an enemy in battle or an attacker in self-defense hardly compared to assassinating a king. Yet, after he had cut off the corner of Saul’s robe, David immediately recognized the implications of his act, and his **heart smote him.** David realized he had gone too far.

2 ▶ Verse 6. As he returned with the prize that had soured his heart, David said to his men: **The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed.** As *the LORD's anointed*, David knew Saul had been set apart or consecrated by God, and as such, he must not be violated. Therefore, to touch, defile, or attack the anointed one meant to approach the Lord Himself and to seek to defile, harm, and remove the Lord from His rightful place. David's act of cutting off the corner of Saul's robe had directly challenged Saul's kingship and authority as **the anointed of the LORD**. David's remorse for his actions meant he still respected Saul as the one anointed by God. That Spirit of the Lord had left Saul (16:14) did not change David's conviction that Saul was still the one chosen and anointed by the Lord to be Israel's king.

We should not attempt to minimize David's action by the amount of damage done, but rather in terms of his target. Cutting off the hem of Saul's robe may seem trivial to us. In order to understand the scope of his action, we need to put it in more modern terms. If someone managed to slip behind the president of the United States and do something to disrespect him by word or action, no one would consider it something trivial. We would expect the individual who did it to face serious consequences for what he had done.

God has placed men and women in places of authority over us. In His sovereignty, He has raised them up and will remove them according to His will. Therefore, we should act with grace toward all who are in authority, and we should certainly not assault or kill them with our words or actions. Even when we disagree, we should show respect and honor for the position the person holds. ◀

Verse 7. Inspired that their leader had cut off a portion of Saul's robe while Saul was all alone in the cave taking care of business, David's men wanted to kill their enemy when they had the clear opportunity. Having repented of his actions, however, **David stayed his servants, ... and suffered them not to rise against Saul.** While not clear from the English translation, the Hebrew word for *stayed* has more punch, because David literally "tore apart" or "reprimanded" his men as he forcefully stopped their ill-advised scheme and fiercely defended Saul's life. Meanwhile, Saul picked up his robe, **rose up out of the cave, and went on his way** back to his men, oblivious to the fact that his enemy, David, had just spared his life.

David had passed a huge test. Israel's next ruler willingly entrusted the matter of his becoming king to God's best timing and judgment.

SUMMARIZE: Refer group members to **PSG page 43** to the summary of King Saul's previous treatment of David:

- *In a jealous rage, Saul tried to pin David to a wall with a spear (1 Sam. 18:7-11; 19:9-10).*
- *Saul tried to have David killed by the Philistines (vv. 20-25).*
- *Saul ordered his son and his servants to kill David (19:1,11).*
- *Saul told Jonathan he wanted David dead (20:30-31).*
- *Saul killed priests for their allegiance to David (22:6-19).*

DISCUSS: Question #2 (PSG, p. 44): How do you typically respond to the authority figures in your life?

(Alternate: When have you been confronted with a difficult authority figure?)

TRANSITION: "Having passed up the opportunity to slay Saul, David decided to confront him nonetheless."

STUDY THE BIBLE

1 Samuel 24:8-11



10 minutes

READ: Ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 24:8-11.

DISCUSS: Question #3 (PSG, p. 45): What do you like best about David's approach in these verses?

GUIDE: Use Bible Commentary **3** to show how David's words and gestures demonstrated humility.

SUMMARIZE: Refer group members to **page 45** in the **PSG** to six ways David showed respect to Saul:

1. David confronted Saul, but he spoke with honor and respect.
2. David bowed as a sign of respect to the king.
3. David urged the king not to listen to the advisors who wrongly accused David of seeking Saul's life.

(Continued on next page.)

1 Samuel 24:8-11

8 David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed.

11 Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.

Speak with grace and conviction toward those in authority.

3 ▶ **Verse 8.** After Saul strolled far enough away from the cave for David to come out safely, David **cried after Saul, saying My lord the king.** Rather than harm Saul, David chose to submit to him and to serve him faithfully, seeking Saul's best interests. David had proven over and over he would not oppose Saul or act in any detrimental way toward him.

David's action came with a measure of risk, since he and his men clearly enjoyed a measure of safety in the cave. They just needed to keep quiet and let Saul and his men depart. Then they could escape by going in the opposite direction.

Now imagine Saul's shock on hearing David call out, *My lord the king!* from the cave he had just left. That shout surely brought shivers to Saul, especially when he turned to see

David lying face down on the ground, displaying reverence and submission to Saul as the king. In so doing, David emphasized what he had just said to his men while letting Saul know he was neither a rebel nor a threat to Saul's life. ◀

Verse 9. David gave no time for Saul to reply to his verbal and action signals of loyalty, because he immediately articulated his passionate and eloquent plea for reconciliation. He appealed to the king to set aside the things others had told him, to listen to David's words, to compare them with his actions, and then judge his guilt or innocence for himself. In beginning his appeal, David cautiously sidestepped accusing Saul of initiating malicious actions against him.

With the skill of an expert lawyer, David tactfully tossed blame for Saul's behavior on some of Saul's servants by asking, **Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?** It's not difficult to imagine that David's integrity and success had triggered some measure of hatred and envy in Saul's court. After all, those of the tribe of Benjamin had no small interest in the kingship of Saul. These men had come to positions of authority because of family and tribal relationship to Saul. Previously, in appealing to their tribal loyalty as well as to their greed, Saul had suggested they had much to lose if David, the son of Jesse, from the tribe of Judah, became king in Saul's place (1 Sam. 22:6-8). No doubt many of those men conspired continually to poison Saul's mind against David with false accusations.

David showed great kindness and tact to Saul, because David knew Saul's fear of David came from Saul himself, not from anyone else. By placing the blame on nameless others, David made it easier for Saul to concede, "*They* were wrong" instead of "*I* was wrong." Even in confronting Saul, David covered Saul's sin.

Speaking with grace and conviction to people in authority will often require a good measure of tact. Even as David spoke the truth to Saul, he showed mercy and kindness to him. When speaking to people who may have wronged us or others, we would do well to follow David's model. In writing to believers enduring great persecution from civil authorities, the apostle Peter wrote, "Charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8). This kind of love does not turn a blind eye to wrongs but sees and accepts the faults of others.

Verse 10. Continuing to make his case, David called on Saul to testify as his first witness. He said, **Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave.** Not long before, 1 Samuel 23:14 reports, "Saul sought [David] every day, but

4. David offered evidence to show his unquestioned respect for the king.

5. David called Saul "my father."

6. David showed his treatment of the king revealed his relationship with God.

DISCUSS: Question #4

(PSG, p. 46): What are some ways we can imitate David's actions and attitudes in our own dealings with authority?

(Alternate: How do David's actions and attitudes compare to what we see in our culture?)

TRANSITION: "Having made his case before the king, David boldly sought resolution to their conflict in the next verses."

STUDY THE BIBLE

1 Samuel 24:12



15 minutes

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 24:12.

GUIDE: Use **Bible**

Commentary **4** on page 49 to show how David trusted God with the outcome and refused to take vengeance himself.

SUMMARIZE: David showed us how we can display a Christlike spirit in verse 12 (PSG, p. 47):

- **Leave judgment in God's hands.** *"The LORD judge between me and thee." Why is it that we can trust God with our eternity, but we can't seem to trust Him with our daily relationships?*
- **Leave your reputation in God's hands.** *When David said, "and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee," he was yielding his reputation to God. The "don't get mad, get even" mentality is*

God delivered him not into his hand." In contrast, David credited God with handing Saul over to him, yet David let Saul go unscathed. Saul realized he had escaped death. David emerged from the very cave where Saul, only moments before, sat totally vulnerable and unaware of David's proximity.

David insisted that, unlike Saul—who had listened to those spreading false rumors about David's alleged murderous plans—David had refused to listen when **some bade me kill thee**. Not long before, David's men urged their leader to take advantage of the good fortune of Saul's coming into the cave to relieve himself. They interpreted it as God delivering Saul into David's hands. But David **spared** Saul.

David declared his motive for sparing the king: he recognized Saul was **the LORD's anointed**. David challenged the idea that he wanted to overthrow Saul by killing him. To harm the king would have been an act of rebellion against God, who had enthroned him. David respected Saul's authority as king because he respected God's ultimate authority.

The phrase, **I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed**, sometimes gets misinterpreted to mean we should never speak against pastors or leaders, thinking they are above criticism or rebuke. But when David recognized that Saul was *the LORD's anointed* and refused to harm him, this meant David would not kill him. He did, however, humbly confront Saul with his sin, hoping Saul would change his heart. Similarly, sometimes our leaders need correcting. David provided the model for speaking with grace whenever this becomes necessary.

Verse 11. David saved his material evidence for last, **My father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand**. By addressing Saul as his "lord" and "king" (vv. 8,10), and now as his "father," David expressed both his respect for Saul and his submission to him. While it was true that Saul had given his daughter Michal to David as his wife, the term *father* was often used in ancient times simply as a sign of respect.

As David held up the corner of Saul's robe, Saul's heart must have sunk. David had absolute proof that he had the full opportunity to kill Saul earlier, but had not done so. If Saul had any doubt about how close he came to dying in that cave, David held all the evidence needed to erase all doubt. Saul's robe would serve as a reminder of how close he had come to death, and that David had spared his life. The robe may have also reminded Saul of Samuel's words to him, that God would transfer the kingdom to another ruler.

With the proof and evidence in his hand, David pronounced the verdict, **I have not sinned against thee**. He cried out for Saul to understand and recognize that he was not guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion against the throne. David had not wronged Saul in any way, yet Saul was hunting David down like a wild animal to kill him. David had presented irrefutable evidence, and Saul needed to acknowledge the facts.

1 Samuel 24:12

12 The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

Leave conflict with authority figures in God's hands.

4 ▶ **Verse 12.** David did not need to say or do anything more to defend himself before Saul. He thus referred the matter to the Lord: **The LORD judge between me and thee**. David had proved he had not harmed Saul when he had the opportunity in the cave. Now David did not simply say, **Mine hand shall not be upon thee**. He made it plain that he had no intention of using any kind of violence against Saul by calling on **the LORD** to **avenge** should He do so.

A day would come when Saul would face judgment. On that day he would lose the throne. David referred the dispute to the Lord as the proper Judge who could both punish the offender and oppressor, and deliver the oppressed. David would take no action to deliver Saul to his judgment. He rested his case entirely in the Lord's hands. In so doing, David set a dynamic example of humility and loyalty. Although driven to insanity by his sinful behavior, Saul was still the ruler of God's people. Therefore, David humbled himself and declared his loyalty to King Saul. ◀

God in His infinite wisdom has established the authorities in our lives (Rom. 13:1). He ordained three institutions of authority: family, church, and government. Each sphere has leaders that God has ordained. Some are good, while others are not so good. It often will not be the easy choice to leave a conflict with someone in authority in God's hands.

We can do little about how the authorities in our lives conduct themselves and lead. Our responsibilities lie in the way we conduct ourselves and how we act and speak toward those in authority. We should remember that by submitting to our authorities, we obey God.

common in our culture. Yet when we consider the cost of Christ's death to give us redemption and forgiveness, our perspective should be increasingly God-focused. When that happens, we become less concerned about our reputations and more focused on Christ.

- **Leave vengeance in God's hands.** *Even as David expressed a desire for God to take vengeance, he determined he would not seek vengeance himself. "But mine hand shall not be upon thee."*

DISCUSS: Question #5

(PSG, p. 48): **Why is it hard to leave vengeance in the hands of the Lord?**

(Alternate: What are the benefits of leaving vengeance in God's hands?)

DO: Invite volunteers to share responses to the activity on **PSG page 48: "Practicing Submission."**

LIVE IT OUT



5 minutes

GUIDE: Emphasize **The Point:** **Respect the authorities God has placed in your life.**

REVIEW: Review **Live It Out** (**PSG, p. 49**; see text to the right). Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

WRAP IT UP

GUIDE: Emphasize that we can respect authorities in our lives when we are abiding in Christ.

PRAY: "Father, help us to remember who we are in You, so that we may treat others with the respect that will bring honor to Your Name."

NOTE: Remind group members that **PSG pages 6-9** are there to journal one another's prayer requests.

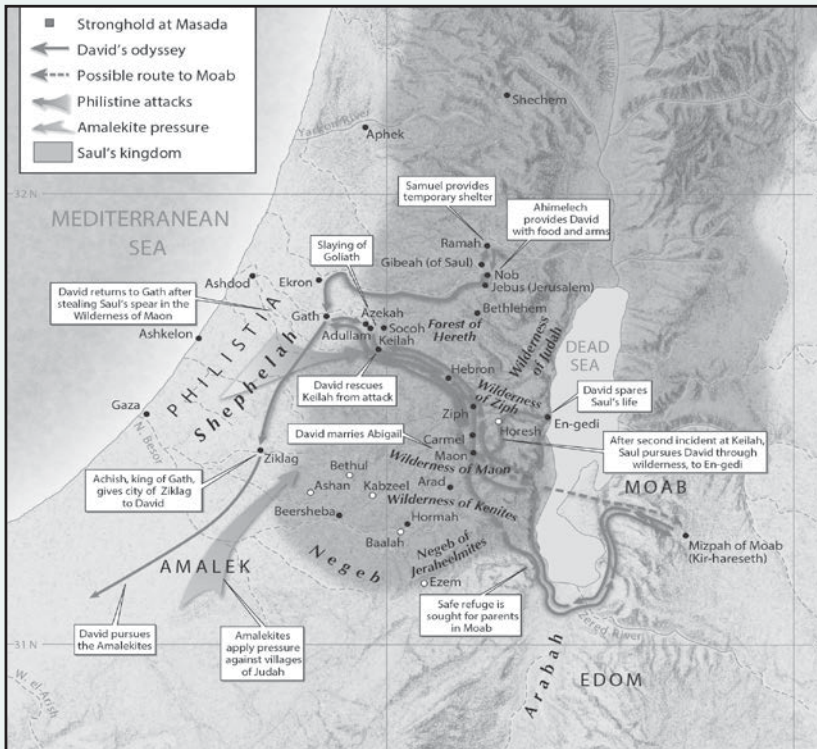
LIVE IT OUT

How will you honor Christ this week by respecting the authority figures in your life? Consider the following applications:

- ▶ **Encourage.** We live in a day when authority is questioned more than honored. Be intentional about expressing support and encouragement to an authority figure in your life.
- ▶ **Pray.** Follow the principle in 1 Timothy 2:1 and pray regularly for those in authority. Make this a part of your regular prayer life each day.
- ▶ **Repent.** If there's someone in authority to whom you have failed to show proper honor or respect, confess that to God. Change your attitude and, as appropriate, apologize to that person for your former lack of respect.

We're going to have disagreements in our world today. We need different perspectives and to share ideas. But we don't need disrespect. Instead, choose to honor one another, including the authority figures God has placed in your life.

BIBLICAL
ILLUSTRATOR



David's earlier life as a warrior and a shepherd proved to be excellent preparation for the time he spent fleeing from Saul. David learned how to be resourceful and how to recognize danger. The solitude of shepherding helped him deal with loneliness during the early days of his flight from Saul. The skills

and leadership David learned and developed while fighting for Saul helped him control the men who gathered around him. Ultimately, David's faith in God sustained him through the difficult days of Saul's pursuit.

The excerpt above is from the article "David as an Outlaw" (Fall 2008), which relates to this session. More *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available that relate to this session. See page 7 about *Biblical Illustrator*.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Jesus Christ is the supreme authority over all of us. We should acknowledge His authority and surrender to His lordship by placing our faith and trust in Him.

Each week, make yourself available either before or after the session to speak privately with anyone in your group who wants to know more about becoming a Christian. See the article, "Leading Someone to the Greatest Decision of All," on page 2 for guidance in leading a person to Christ.

Remind group members that **page 2** in the **PSG** offers guidance in how to become a Christian. Encourage believers to consider using this article as they have opportunities to lead others to Christ.



Free additional ideas for your group are available at
BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra