

## “A Rock Star is Rocked!” (1 Samuel 17:55–18:30)

Can you think of a time when you experienced incredible success? Perhaps you received a promotion at work that your coworkers applied for. Maybe you won an athletic contest with last second heroics. Perhaps you received a huge scholarship from a big time college or graduate school. Maybe you married the most beautiful woman you know (I did!). Perhaps you had a big financial investment succeed. How did you handle your particular success? Did you get caught up in the excitement and emotion of it? Did you brag or take credit? Do you remember what transpired after your success? How long did your moment of glory last? How did people respond to you weeks or months later?

After David defeated Goliath, he became a *rock* star. That’s right; all it took was one rock for him to rock the world. We shall see that Goliath’s gargantuan fall shook more than just the ground. Now everyone takes notice of David.<sup>1</sup> He moves from being a lonely shepherd boy to being a household name overnight. He experiences fame, fortune, friends, and foes.<sup>2</sup> Yes, you read that last word right: foes. As wonderful as success can be, it brings its own set of problems: naysayers, critics, skeptics, and even enemies. Many people have said that success isn’t all that it’s cracked up to be. It can be difficult, stressful, and painful. Thus, Josef Tson said, “Ninety–five percent of us can handle failure, but only five percent can handle success.”<sup>3</sup> In 1 Sam 17:55–18:30<sup>4</sup> we will see how David responds to success.

**1. David experiences fame, fortune, and friendship (17:55–18:5).** Our story begins with a “flashback” to the time when David went out to fight with Goliath (17:40), and then fast-forwards to David’s victory. “Now when Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner the commander of the army, ‘Abner, whose son is this young man?’ And Abner said, ‘By your life, O king, I do not know.’ The king said, ‘You inquire whose son the youth is.’ So when David returned from killing the Philistine,<sup>5</sup> Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine’s head in his hand. Saul said to him, ‘Whose son are you, young man?’ And David answered, ‘*I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite*’” (17:55–58). There have been numerous theories proposed as to why Saul and Abner didn’t recognize David.<sup>6</sup> However, the text doesn’t say that they didn’t recognize David. Rather, what Saul wanted to know was the name of David’s father. Saul needed this information so that he might fulfill his pledge to make David’s house free of tax obligations (17:25). It is also possible that Saul wanted to know the parentage of his potential son-in-law,<sup>7</sup> wanted to see what power rivalry David’s family might present to him,<sup>8</sup> or wanted to ask Jesse to let him keep David permanently (see 18:2).<sup>9</sup> Whichever option is correct, David was to experience great success.

Why was David so successful? I believe success came to David because he didn’t seek it. Earlier the royal household employed David to play the harp for Saul whenever an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him (16:14). Yet, each time his task was over, David went back to tend his father’s sheep in Bethlehem (17:15). David had to cope with humiliating circumstances. He had been discounted by his father and despised by his brothers. The last thing that David was expecting or pursuing was earthly success. He never sought to make a name for himself; he waited for God to exalt him.<sup>10</sup> Eventually, when the time was right, God unexpectedly gave David the opportunity to dismantle Goliath. However, David wasn’t seeking fame, nor was he trying to prove himself; he was simply angry that an uncircumcised Philistine would speak as he did against God and against God’s people and go unpunished.<sup>11</sup>

Like David, obscurity may prepare you for success. Thus, I need to ask some important questions: Do you live for God during seasons of obscurity and success? When no one knows your name or recognizes those things that you do, is it enough to simply honor God? How do you cope with obscurity or a lack of recognition? Do you look to God alone for your approval? What about when you experience success whether great or small? Do you immediately take the opportunity to glorify yourself or do you deflect the praise to God? Are you guilty of attempting to manipulate circumstances so that you are successful?

In 18:1 we transition from fame and fortune to friendship: **“Now it came about when he [David] had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.”** Jonathan’s soul was “knit to”<sup>12</sup> David’s soul. In today’s culture, it is popular to speak of “male bonding.” Well, now you know that this concept has a biblical precedent. Jonathan loved David as himself. He was a selfless friend. Sadly, it has become increasingly popular to assert that the love between Jonathan and David was a homosexual relationship.<sup>13</sup> However, there is *no*, I repeat *no*, sexual aspect to their relationship. Furthermore, the Hebrew word used here for “love” (*ahab*) is *never* used of homosexual relationships in the Bible.<sup>14</sup> Some twist 2 Sam 1:26 where David says, “Your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women.” However, these words are simply a tribute to Jonathan after his death.<sup>15</sup> A more important issue is: What drew David and Jonathan together? Quite simply, these two men shared a common faith in God, a common courage as warriors, and a common devotion to God’s people. This is what true lasting friendships should be founded upon. Do you have a friend who meets these criteria? Are you a friend who is characterized by these essentials? If not, look for such a friend and become that friend yourself. When your life is said and done, those who have challenged and inspired you in your faith in Christ and faithfulness to His people will mean the most to you.

The interaction between David and Jonathan continues in 18:2–4: **“Saul took him [David] that day and did not let him return to his father’s house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.<sup>16</sup> Jonathan stripped himself of the robe<sup>17</sup> that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.”** Jonathan stripped himself of his robe, armor, sword, bow, and belt. All this was both significant and surprising because “clothes made the man” and signified his position. This action is a dramatic act that seems to transfer to David Jonathan’s right to claim the throne.<sup>18</sup> No one in the Near East would do that. In Jonathan’s day, you did not transfer your crown rights to an up and comer, you eliminated him!<sup>19</sup> Yet, Jonathan gladly gave up the symbols of kingship to his trusted friend. Jonathan was as different from Saul as light is from darkness. If anyone should ever doubt that children don’t have to follow in the flawed footsteps of their fathers, just think of Jonathan. He gladly relinquished his right to kingship. In contrast, his father was willing to resort to murder to keep the fragile hold on the throne.<sup>20</sup> Although Jonathan likely had a poor father, he made no excuses for his family of origin. Instead, he trusted the Lord to shape him into a godly man. If you have had an especially difficult family of origin, Jesus Christ can (and will) give you the power to overcome the hurt and neglect that you have experienced. In the course of my life and ministry I have seen many godly men and women not allow their upbringing to hold back their potential in Christ. Will you surrender your past family disappointments and wounds to the Lord and ask Him to grant you His grace to overcome? Do it today! This is a prayer that God longs to answer.

David and Jonathan had a friendship free from jealousy. It was surprising that these two young men became such good friends, because one would expect them to have been fiercely hostile and jealous of each other. Jonathan was expecting to be the next king. Remember, Jonathan himself was a war hero and God singularly used him in the past. In 14:1–15 Jonathan and his sword-bearer won a remarkable victory for Israel against the Philistines. He was the “ultimate warrior” before David came onto the scene and defeated Goliath. Yet, Jonathan was a humble and godly man who wanted the best for David. He was also about thirty years older than David,<sup>21</sup> so he likely recognized the need to pass the baton to a younger faithful man. In my personal experience, I have found older, godly men to be my greatest source of strength and encouragement. In my doctoral studies, the men who helped me the most were all about thirty years older than me. My dear friend and mentor, Hilton Jarvis, is seventy-eight-years-old. As you look for those who will shape the course of your life and the lives of your children, do not neglect those who are twenty to thirty (or more) years older than you. They are often the most mature, thoughtful, and prayerful. Such ones also tend to be the most forward-focused because they know their time on earth is drawing near. Their burden is to transfer truth to the next generation. Regardless of age, may we have this same unselfish spirit. It is a friendship magnet. When you learn to live for others, they will live for you.<sup>22</sup>

The first scene concludes in 18:5 with this summary sentence: **“So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered;<sup>23</sup> and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul’s servants.”<sup>24</sup>** Everything that David did “prospered.” Most English versions use some form of the word “success” (NET, ESV, HCSB, NRSV, NIV, NLT) when translating this verse. This is in keeping with our emphasis on success. Although David didn’t go looking for success, success found him.

**2. David experiences foes amidst his fame (18:6–30).** Our story carries on in 18:6–9: **“It happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments. The women sang as they played, and said, ‘Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands.’ Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, ‘They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?’ Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on.”**

In these verses David experiences the equivalent to a modern-day tickertape parade. There are even women singing and dancing to his theme song!<sup>25</sup> One quick bit of Bible trivia: Dancing was the usual expression of rejoicing upon occasions of national triumph (Exod 15:20–26; Judg 11:34) and at religious festivals (Ps 149:3). As a rule, dancing was confined to women, but in 2 Sam 6:14 David gets undignified and dances before the Lord in a linen ephod.<sup>26</sup>

Now back to David’s song, which was number one on Israel’s Billboard top one hundred. Contrary to what it seems, the song wasn’t intended to be a slight to King Saul. The laws of Hebrew poetry required that the greater, Saul, be named first and then the lesser, David, second. Furthermore, the construct required smaller number to be mentioned before the higher.<sup>27</sup> Yet, there still may be a subtle point that these ladies are likely making.<sup>28</sup> The poetic use of exaggeration is also evident here. David hadn’t yet slain even a dozen people, much less thousands. The women didn’t intend to demean the king; they were simply praising God for His ever-increasing benefits to the nation.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, Saul took the song in the worst possible way. From a human perspective, this is understandable. Put yourself in Saul’s sandals: All over Israel they sang this tune. They’re dancing in the streets celebrating David’s incredible victory. Saul hated it. The first time he heard it he didn’t like it, but by the fortieth time he was beside himself. In 18:8 the writer says that Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him (lit. “it was evil in his eyes”). This ties back to 18:5 where everything that David did “was pleasing in the sight [eyes] of all the people and also in the sight [eyes] of Saul’s servants.” Saul appears to be the only one who doesn’t love David. Saul’s fatal flaw was: He saw the kingdom as belonging to himself and not God. Saul, determined to keep his job, felt threatened. He looked around, wondering whom God had chosen to succeed him.<sup>30</sup>

In 18:10–12 Saul’s behavior becomes even more erratic: **“Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved<sup>31</sup> in the midst of the house, while David was playing *the harp* with his hand, as usual; and a spear *was* in Saul’s hand. Saul hurled the spear for he thought, ‘I will pin David to the wall.’ But David escaped from his presence twice. Now Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul.”** Once again, the evil spirit from God attacks Saul (16:14–23). This is God’s means of disciplining Saul with the hope of turning him back to the Lord. There is a stark contrast between David playing the harp “with his hand” and Saul having a spear “in his hand.”<sup>32</sup> Saul tried to kill David, not once, but twice! David barely got out of the way. Can’t you just see Saul’s spear quivering as it sticks in the wall? I’m sure David’s ears were ringing with the swoosh of the spear hurling toward him. How crazy that his friend would turn on him like this.<sup>33</sup> It is likely that initially David gave Saul the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps David thought Saul was just having a bad day.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, these two spear throwing incidents scared Saul more than they did David, for Saul recognized that God had left him and was with David.<sup>35</sup> What a great principle: Even if the king is against you, God is capable of protecting you. If the Lord wants you to continue to serve him, He will keep you alive regardless of who is trying to kill you.

Have you ever had to work for a spear-throwing king? Have you ever been around someone who takes her authority and position as an opportunity to throw spears into the lives of others? Sometimes people use their authority as an excuse for their bad behavior. That's what life was like for David in Saul's palace.<sup>36</sup> Many biblical characters have suffered through this same plight. So if you are suffering unjustly, pray that the Lord will give you strength. He can use you as a powerful testimony to your jealous and ruthless boss and on-looking coworkers.

In 18:13–16 Saul continues his devious schemes to get rid of David: **“Therefore Saul removed him [David] from his presence and appointed him as his commander of a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. David was prospering in all his ways for the LORD was with him. When Saul saw that he was prospering greatly, he dreaded him.”**<sup>37</sup> But all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them.” David draws such different reactions: faithful love from Jonathan and Israel and murderous envy from Saul. Yet despite persecution from Saul, God continues to bless David. One cannot miss the repetitions in chapter 18. There are four references to David's success (18:5, 14, 15, 30), three assertions that Yahweh is “with” David (18:12, 14, 28), and six uses of some form of the verb “to love” (18:1, 3, 16, 20, 22, 28). Everyone seems to love David. Not Saul, however; he fears and stands in awe of David—the text of so three times (17:12, 15, 29).<sup>38</sup>

In 18:17–30 Saul's hatred toward David becomes even more evident: **“Then Saul said to David, ‘Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the LORD'S battles.’ For Saul thought, ‘My hand shall not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.’”**<sup>39</sup> But David said to Saul, **“Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be the king's son-in-law?”** So it came about at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife” (18:17–19). Saul promised that he would give his daughter in marriage to the man who killed Goliath (see 17:25). Unfortunately, Saul defaulted on his offer and gave his oldest daughter to another.

A new possibility emerges in 18:20–21: **“Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. When they told Saul, the thing was agreeable to him. Saul thought, ‘I will give her to him that she may become a snare<sup>40</sup> to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.’ Therefore Saul said to David, ‘For a second time you may be my son-in-law today.’”** What kind of father would do such a thing? Every young woman looks forward to marrying the man of her dreams! But Saul cared nothing for his daughter's feelings and ruthlessly set out to use her to ensnare the man she loves. Although we are not speaking of physical or sexual mistreatment here, this was a form of child abuse, for Saul planned to use his child for his own selfish ends.<sup>41</sup>

Admittedly, it is easy to be especially hard on Saul. But we must recognize that we, too, bear great similarity with King Saul.<sup>42</sup> Maybe you've never thrown a physical spear at someone, but you've probably thrown an emotional or verbal spear at someone, perhaps even someone you love. Like Saul, you have likely used one of your children for selfish purposes, maybe to vicariously live your dreams through your child. As bad as Saul was, it should be rather easy for you and I to see ourselves in him.

Our story gets even more interesting in 18:22–27: **“Then Saul commanded his servants, ‘Speak to David secretly, saying, ‘Behold, the king delights in you, and all his servants love you; now therefore, become the king's son-in-law.’ So Saul's servants spoke these words to David. But David said, ‘Is it trivial in your sight to become the king's son-in-law, since I am a poor man and lightly esteemed?’ The servants of Saul reported to him according to these words which David spoke. Saul then said, ‘Thus you shall say to David, ‘The king does not desire any dowry except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king's enemies.’ Now Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.”**<sup>43</sup> When his servants told David these words, it pleased David to become the king's son-in-law” (18:22–26a).

These verses are fascinating to me. Saul is a jealous, conniving, backstabbing murderer and David is a humble, gracious, unassuming gentleman. Twice David has tried to humbly decline marrying into Saul's family. And when Saul offers a sure death sentence, David accepts. Instead, he takes the bait because he wanted to become Saul's son-in-law. I need to stop here and ask: How would you like to have Saul for a father-in-law? Perhaps you think you do? I can assure you that your situation is probably not nearly as bad as David's. I can't imagine desiring to marry into Saul's family. David is indeed a courageous man of God!

In case you doubt David's courage, take look at 18:26b–27: **“Before the days had expired David rose up and went, he and his men, and struck down two hundred<sup>44</sup> men among the Philistines.<sup>45</sup> Then David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full number to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. So Saul gave him Michal his daughter for a wife.”** Saul hoped that David would be killed trying to meet his quota, but David one-upped him. You can call me vulgar if you'd like, but I can just see David walking into the throne room and then counting out the foreskins one by one. One foreskin, two foreskins, three foreskins . . . one hundred ninety-nine foreskins, two hundred foreskins! I also wish I could have been in the palace when David presented the trophy of two hundred foreskins so that I could see King Saul's face.<sup>46</sup> Can you imagine? His plan had backfired! Not only was David still alive and kicking, his reputation had gone up several notches, and he was about to be joined to the royal family.<sup>47</sup>

Our story concludes in 18:28–30: **“When Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him,<sup>48</sup> then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David's enemy continually. Then the commanders of the Philistines went out to battle, and it happened as often as they went out, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul. So his name was highly esteemed.”** Now we are told explicitly for the first time that Saul knew that the Lord was with David.<sup>49</sup> The Hebrew word translated “enemy” (*ayab*) is the participle of a verb that means “to be hostile to,” “to hate.” Saul had adopted the very opposite stance toward David from those who “loved” him—Jonathan, Michal, and the people.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, David “behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul.” The phrase “behaved more wisely” is contrasted with the phrase “to play the fool” used of Saul in 13:13.

The irony of the text is clear in the repetition of the expression “he was pleased” in 18:20 and 26. Saul was pleased because he sees Michal's love for David as another opportunity to entrap David, but David is pleased because he sees it as an opportunity to become the king's son-in-law. The ironic twist illustrates the nature of Saul's relationship with David. “Everything Saul does to thwart David's rise works ironically to David's advantage; every opportunity Saul attempts to seize for himself turns in the end into an opportunity for David.”<sup>51</sup> The more God's enemies resist His will, the more success God's children experience. Perhaps we can call this the biblical principle of “reverse returns” for those who oppose God's work. Those who oppose a servant of God, someone who has God “with” him or her, merely serve to propel the purposes of God further against their own wishes.<sup>52</sup>

We live in very scary days politically, morally, and even spiritually. Our freedoms are slowly (and in some cases quickly) being taken away from us. Yet, we must boldly press forward. *We must honor God in both success and persecution.* If we are to be used by God we will have to face differing opinions of us. We will need to honor God regardless of what people think of us. *We must honor God in both success and persecution.* This can hit close to home. It's possible that if you strive to grow in Christ that your spouse may not want to join you, which may prove to be devastating to you. It's likely that if Satan can't get to you that he will go after your children because this has the most potential to hurt you. When (not if) persecution comes to America, some will leave your church, which will severely sting. Yet, the clarion call sounds forth: *We must honor God in both success and persecution.*

### **Scripture References**

1 Samuel 17:55–18:30

Proverbs 17:17; 19:24; 27:6

Ecclesiastes 4:10

Romans 12:9–13, 14–21

Philippians 1:27; 2:2

Matthew 10:34–42

1 Peter 4:12–19

### **Study Questions**

1. How would I describe my relative success in life and ministry? How well have I fared during times of obscurity? How have I handled success? How has God prepared me for various seasons of blessing? What did I learn through those periods of preparation? Am I able to be content in the various circumstances and seasons of my life? Read Philippians 4:11–12.
2. Do I have a Jonathan-David type relationship with someone of the same sex? If so, describe the friendship. How did this relationship begin? What qualities promoted a deeper friendship? How has this individual helped me grow spiritually? In what ways have I been a friend to this person? As a result of this relationship, how have I learned to be a good friend to others?
3. It has been said, “Life does not consist of achieving your goals but in fulfilling your promises.” Do I agree with this statement? Why or why not? When it comes to being a covenant-keeping person, would those who know me say I am a promise keeper? In what area of my life is my integrity most under attack? Who can help me work toward health and wholeness in this area?
4. Have I had an enemy who has sought to destroy my personal well-being (e.g., reputation, relationships, health)? How have I interacted with this individual? Have I sought to avenge myself? What was the result? Read Romans 12:14–21. What can I do this week to ensure so far as it depends upon me, I am at peace with all people (Romans 12:18)?
5. How are Christian churches and parachurch ministries undermined by jealousy and envy? What is my response to those with obvious spiritual gifts? Am I a person whose overarching goal is the unity Jesus taught in John 17? Do I accentuate the positive or the negative in my fellow believers? How can I build up my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? Read Ephesians 4:1–6, 29–32.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel*. Focus on the Bible (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, [1988] 2000), 155.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Eaton, *1 Samuel*. Preaching Through The Bible (Kent: Sovereign World, 1995), 76.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in R. T. Kendall, *A Man After God's Own Heart* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2001), 105. I am also reminded of Prov 27:21: "The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, and each *is tested* by the praise accorded him."

<sup>4</sup> There is disagreement on the placement of 1 Sam 17:55–58. Some scholars believe that these verses belong with 17:1–54 with a new section starting at 18:1. Some of these scholars include 18:1–5 with 17:1–58. However, it seems preferable to start a new section at 17:55. See David Toshio Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*. New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 469–74.

<sup>5</sup> For an excellent response on "Who Killed Goliath?" see Walter C. Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, [1996] 1997), Electronic ed.

<sup>6</sup> Vreeland suggests, "It is possible on one of his extended furloughs David grew a couple of inches and sprouted some muscles and facial hair." Gary D. Vreeland, *The Darker Side of Samuel, Saul, and David* (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2008), 200. Kaiser addresses the question, "Why Did Saul Ask David's Identity?" in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, Electronic ed. and adopts the view of older commentators that 1 Samuel 16–18 are not given in chronological order. Instead, they are transposed by a figure of speech known as hysteron proteron, in which something is put last that according to the usual order should be put first. While Vreeland and Kaiser offer plausible alternatives, I prefer the view proposed in the main text of this sermon.

<sup>7</sup> James E. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*. College Press, NIV Commentary (Joplin: College Press, 2000), 232; Peter J. Leithart, *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 & 2 Samuel* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), 100; Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 643; David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Nottingham: Apollos, Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009), 202.

<sup>8</sup> John Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 231.

<sup>9</sup> Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 470.

<sup>10</sup> See 1 Pet 5:5: "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time."

<sup>11</sup> Kendall, *A Man After God's Own Heart*, 106.

<sup>12</sup> The verb *qashar* ("knit to") is similar to Judah's words in Gen 44:30 ("bound up in the lad's life").

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Tom Horner, *Jonathan Love David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 26–39; David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 114. These references are cited by Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 146 n. 232.

<sup>14</sup> This same word is used in 1 Kgs 5:1 where we read that King Hiram of Tyre had loved David all the days of his life. This usage indicates the friendly relations between two neighboring kings.

<sup>15</sup> Constable remarks: "However the Hebrew word *'aheb*, translated 'love' here, nowhere else describes homosexual desire or activity. Rather, when homosexual relations are in view, the Holy Spirit used the word *yada*, translated 'know' in the sense of 'have sex with' (cf. Gen. 19:5; Judg. 19:22)." Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on 1 Samuel," 2010 ed.: [www.sonlight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1samuel.pdf](http://www.sonlight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1samuel.pdf), 73. Bill T. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*. New International Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 271–72 does an excellent job refuting the arguments of pro-homosexual interpreters.

<sup>16</sup> Some scholars argue that this use of love refers to political loyalty, not so much personal affection. However, Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 472 correctly states: "Yet just the word 'love' does not imply an upward-directed political loyalty. (Even politically, 'love' was supposed to be both upward and downward directed; see on 16:21). And the same word is used of Saul, Michal, and the people (see on v. 16), too. However, it certainly was a strong matter of personal loyalty that would not let self-interest get in the way of justice."

<sup>17</sup> Woodhouse insightfully observes: "Once again a 'robe' features in the story. Hannah made a 'robe' for her son Samuel (each year, 1 Samuel 2:19). The 'robe' of Samuel became a symbol of the kingdom (1 Samuel 15:27, 28). Now Jonathan's 'robe' symbolizes the kingdom and is transferred to David! In due course Saul's 'robe' will represent his kingdom that David will refuse to take by force (1 Samuel 24:4, 11). The last appearance of a 'robe' in 1 Samuel will be Samuel's robe again (1 Samuel 28:14)." John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*. Preaching the Word series (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 605 n. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*. Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 136; Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 643; Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 208. Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 472–73 takes a very cautious position on arriving at this conclusion. He writes: "However, it [transferring a garment is a transfer of

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authority] cannot always have been the case, as the other people in this chapter do not seem to have recognized it as an abdication, and so it is hard to go beyond saying that here it was a very strong statement of affection and respect.”

<sup>19</sup> Davis, *1 Samuel*, 156.

<sup>20</sup> Erwin Lutzer, *Growing Through Conflict* (Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1992), 35.

<sup>21</sup> Constable, “Notes on 1 Samuel,” 73.

<sup>22</sup> PreachingToday citation from *Paramahansa Yogananda, Christian Reader*, Vol. 35, no. 2;

[www.preachingtoday.com](http://www.preachingtoday.com); accessed 15 February 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Many scholars rightly note the parallels between David and Joseph (see Gen 41:38–40). E.g., Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*. New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 200; Leithart, *A Son to Me*, 101.

<sup>24</sup> Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 474 remarks: “Verse 5 is a summary paragraph with three sub-paragraphs. The terminus of the paragraph is a sentence with a personal subject, *And it was good*. This is the first of three expressions with political overtones; the other two are vv. 16 and 30.”

<sup>25</sup> Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 346 comments: “To appreciate the love that people had for David, we must be aware of the enormous impact that the defeat of Goliath would have had. Remember that the Philistines were the single greatest threat to Israel’s existence, and a very real threat at that. For some forty days the Israelite troops have been quaking in terror at the abuse bellowed by Goliath. It was clear that the Philistines were about to either become Philistine slaves or to be exterminated.”

<sup>26</sup> Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 235.

<sup>27</sup> Hamilton writes: “It is unlikely that this song is intended to elevate David’s accomplishments over Saul’s. These women would hardly choose this occasion to denigrate their king. Rather, the two lines are reflective of a feature of Hebrew poetry in which a number in the first line is increased by one unit in the next, for example, ‘three . . . four’ or ‘six . . . seven.’ In the case of one thousand the next number would be ten thousand (Gervitz 1964: 17). Another illustration of the sequence is present in Deut. 32:30: ‘How could one have routed one thousand and two put ten thousand [a myriad] to flight?’” Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Historical Books* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 264. See also Klein 188; Youngblood; Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 644.

<sup>28</sup> Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 478 concludes: “However, as Freedman notes this is ‘the only example of standard number-parallelism, among all those cited by [Gervitz], in which there is a significant distinction of subjects: Saul and David.’”

<sup>29</sup> Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 136–37 aptly remarks: “In victory there is no need for destructive comparison. There is enough joy for both to share fully. Saul sees David as a threat and competitor.”

<sup>30</sup> Lutzer, *Growing Through Conflict*, 36.

<sup>31</sup> This is the same Hebrew verb that describes Saul prophesying (*naba*) in 1 Sam 10:6, 10, 11, 13; 18:10; 19:24.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 236.

<sup>33</sup> Vines writes: “Jealousy just coiled itself around Saul’s heart like a serpent squeezing all the love out. Had David done anything wrong? No. He was faithful to his king. He doesn’t undermine him or undercut him in any way. It’s all in Saul’s heart. King Saul was on his way out, and he sees the power shifting. Saul’s sun is setting; David’s sun is rising. And Saul knows it.” Jerry Vines, *Pursuing God’s Own Heart* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 36.

<sup>34</sup> Davis, *1 Samuel*, 157–58: rightly suggests: “Saul’s attendants may have said: ‘The king is in a really bad mood today, David.’ They may have thought of Saul’s condition as something not quite under his control (cf. 16:15). In any case, David would have no particular reason to interpret Saul’s spear throws as murderous by design. More likely they were construed as outbursts of Saul’s reoccurring madness. Dangerous but not malicious.”

<sup>35</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 202.

<sup>36</sup> Vines, *Pursuing God’s Own Heart*, 35.

<sup>37</sup> Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 274 writes: “The theme of the paragraph is repeated twice: Yahweh is with David and Saul is afraid of David (18:12, 14–15; cf. 18:28–29). These statements form the theological centerpiece of the chapter and give the narrator’s underlying foundation for what is happening historically in the family of Saul and in Saul himself.”

<sup>38</sup> Davis, *1 Samuel*, 157. Davis also provides an intriguing structural summary:

Saul’s son and his clothes, 1–4

David’s success, 5

Saul’s displeasure and his spear, 6–11

David’s success, 12–16

Saul’s daughter and her price, 17–27

David’s success, 28–30

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<sup>39</sup> Gordon rightly states: “Saul is more concerned about his personal position than about the nation’s security.” Robert P. Gordon, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*. Library of Biblical Interpretation series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 161.

<sup>40</sup> The Hebrew word for “snare” (*moqesh*) is often used in the OT to describe entrapments to idolatry.

<sup>41</sup> Kendall, *A Man After God’s Own Heart*, 116.

<sup>42</sup> Edwards wrote: “Saul is in your bloodstream, in the marrow of your bones. He makes up the very flesh and muscle of your heart. He is mixed into your soul. He inhabits the nuclei of your atoms. King Saul was one with you.” Gene Edwards, *A Tale of Three Kings* (Wheaton: Tyndale [1980] 1992), 24.

<sup>43</sup> Saul’s plan didn’t work, but David must have remembered it because years later when David, in the lowest moment of his life, needed to kill an innocent man, he used the same plan with Uriah the Hittite. The only difference was—it worked when David tried it (2 Sam 11:16–17).

<sup>44</sup> The LXX (Greek OT) reads “one hundred” which is sometimes assumed to be correct on the basis of 2 Sam 3:14. The latter verse, however, simply quotes Saul’s original figure (1 Sam 18:25) as the price for Michal’s hand.

<sup>45</sup> Hamilton, *Handbook on the Historical Books*, 265 comments: “To collect two hundred foreskins of the Philistines is interesting, for throughout the Old Testament the Philistines are referred to as ‘the uncircumcised ones’ (e.g., 17:26, ‘this uncircumcised Philistine’). This event may be referred to in Ps. 118:10–12, where the writer says three times, ‘All nations surrounded me; in the name of the Lord I cut them off.’ The verb ‘cut off’ is really ‘circumcise (by removing the foreskin),’ so that one could translate, ‘All nations surrounded me, but in Yahweh’s name indeed I will cut off their foreskins’ (M. Danhood, *Psalms III: 101–150* [Garden City, N.Y.: 1970], 154, 157–58.”

<sup>46</sup> Davis, *I Samuel*, 158 n 4: “Some people are repulsed by such ancient ‘barbarism.’ But barbarism is as much modern—more so—than ancient, something a little history of warfare and of persecution will make clear. At least these Philistines were dead before they were mutilated; much warfare is not so ‘merciful.’ Such practices were not uncommon in the Near East. Egyptians might count several hands of their enemies (Judg. 8:6, Heb.); Assyrians might tally heads. Egyptians sometimes cut off and counted the male organs of the sea peoples they killed in battle. See Claus Schedl, *History of the Old Testament*, 5 vols. (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1972): 3:118. Philistine males did not practice circumcision as did Israelites and others (e.g., Moabites, Ammonites); hence Saul could ask for a hundred foreskins of Philistine dead.”

<sup>47</sup> See also Woodhouse, *I Samuel*, 362.

<sup>48</sup> Leithart, *A Son to Me*, 102 notes that Michal is the only woman in the OT who is said to have loved a man.

<sup>49</sup> Davis, *I Samuel*, 158 asks: “Was this [1 Samuel 18] written only for David’s sake? Might it mean to suggest that this quiet protection of Yahweh is the heritage of others among his servants? Might it imply that much of Yahweh’s protection is completely unknown to you?”

<sup>50</sup> Woodhouse, *I Samuel*, 363.

<sup>51</sup> P. Kyle, McCarter Jr., *I Samuel*. Anchor Bible series (Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 318.

<sup>52</sup> Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 277.