



The Characters in Your Life's Story

STUDY GUIDE

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Throughout this study, we will use the character of David to see the different archetypes and how they show up in his story. Each of the archetypes of supporting characters play critical roles in our lives, just as we play critical roles in the lives of others. We will understand that even characters who feel negative are people God uses to help drive God's story of love and help us value the plot line Jesus is writing into our lives.

Register to participate weekly in the Sunday Night Bible Study sessions at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom at st.lukes.org/adults. Recorded sessions are available for viewing and listening Mondays at st.lukes.org/podcast.

WEEK 1 | August 15-22

The Herald/Harbinger: Samuel and Hannah

Key Texts: Judges 21:25; 1 Samuel 2; 8; 15-16

Lecture Notes:

Think about it...

Who has been your herald/harbinger?	
What age were you when you knew this person?	
What is a key moment or encounter you remember having with this person?	
What feelings come up when you think of this person?	
What would you say to this person if you saw them today?	
How are they like Samuel was for David? How are they different?	

Podcast Notes:

For Discussion in Life Together Groups and Personal Reflection

- Put yourself in Samuel's shoes (or sandals) in 1 Samuel 8. How do you think you would have felt about or reacted to the people's request for a king?

- Saul is stripped of his kingship in 1 Sam 15. Do you think the punishment is excessive given the crime? Do you think it's fair that David does not lose the kingship for what are seemingly bigger sins (rape and murder)? Why or why not?

- In 1 Sam 15:22, Samuel famously says to Saul, "Surely to obey is better than sacrifice." How would you translate this statement for the church today?

- 1 Samuel 16:1 reports that Samuel is grieving over Saul. What, specifically, do you think he is grieving? What might you (individually or as a church) need to stop grieving in order to embrace the new thing that is coming?

- Heralds/harbingers can sometimes play a mentoring role in the life of the protagonist. Who have been influential mentors in your life and how have they, like Hannah and Samuel, directed you to new and surprising things?

- We all play a role in each other's stories. When have you been a herald/harbinger in someone else's life (or felt led to be that character)? How did it turn out? If you didn't do it, what made you hold back? How would you act differently now?

SERMON NOTES

PRAYER CONCERNS

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How would you sign the yearbook of your herald/harbinger?

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Additional Notes:

Lecture Notes:

Think about it...

Who has been your antagonist?	
What age were you when you knew this person?	
What is a key moment or encounter you remember having with this person?	
What feelings come up when you think of this person?	
What would you say to this person if you saw them today?	
How are they like Goliath & Saul were for David? How are they different?	

Podcast Notes:

For Discussion in Life Together Groups and Personal Reflection

- David is the prototypical underdog: under-sized, under-estimated, not the right pedigree, etc. Why is this important for the story? Why do underdogs (Rocky, Rudy, Hoosiers, etc.) appeal to us even to this day?

- Read 1 Samuel 17:24-30. What emboldens David to go into a battle even though he is clearly overmatched?

- Why are antagonists necessary for a good story? What role do they play in shaping the plot and the character of the protagonist?

- There are two main antagonists in the story of David: Goliath and Saul. Which do you think is a more formidable foe for David? Why?

- In 1 Samuel 23, David spares Saul's life. What do you think led David to do this? Should all antagonists be spared (Goliath wasn't)?

- How have the antagonists of your life shaped who you are today?

- Have you ever played the role of antagonist in someone else's life? How did that turn out? What, if anything, would you do differently now?

SERMON NOTES

PRAYER CONCERNS

How would you sign the yearbook of your antagonist?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

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Who has been your caregiver/protector?	
What age were you when you knew this person?	
What is a key moment or encounter you remember having with this person?	
What feelings come up when you think of this person?	
What would you say to this person if you saw them today?	
How are they like Jonathan & Michal were for David? How are they different?	

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For Discussion in Life Together Groups and Personal Reflection

- Try to view these chapters from Saul's perspective. What would it have been like to know that your son and daughter are both irresistibly drawn to the man who will one day replace you as king? Does this change your view of the Saul-David conflict and, if so, how?

- In 2 Samuel 1, David utters a heart wrenching lament over the death of Saul and Jonathan. What does it reveal about David that he laments the loss of both his best friend and his chief antagonist?

- In what is arguably the high point of his kingship, David creates space at his royal table for Mephibosheth. Why and how is this story important for the church today?

- Consider famous caregivers/protectors in film and literature: Samwise to Frodo, Hagrid and Hermione to Harry Potter, Leia to Luke. Where would the main characters be without them? Why are they essential?

- Jonathan is never mentioned in the parallel account of David's life found in 1 Chronicles. What is lost when Jonathan is left out of David's story?

- Who have been the Jonathans in your life? To whom have you been a Jonathan?

- As Jonathan was David's caregiver/protector, David later becomes the caregiver/protector of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth. When have you been in a situation to be a caregiver for someone else? How did that experience shape you?

SERMON NOTES

PRAYER CONCERNS

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How would you sign the yearbook of your caregiver/protector?

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Additional Notes:

Lecture Notes:

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Think about it...

Who has been your nemesis?	
What age were you when you knew this person?	
What is a key moment or encounter you remember having with this person?	
What feelings come up when you think of this person?	
What would you say to this person if you saw them today?	
How are they like David's Ego was for David? How are they different?	

Podcast Notes:

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For Discussion in Life Together Groups and Personal Reflection

- Every time it is reported to David that one of his rivals has died (Saul, Ishbaal, Abner), David is angered and laments. What do you make of this response? Do you think David's anger/sadness is authentic or could there be other motivations at play?

- In the lecture, David's relation with Bathsheba is described not as an "affair" but rather as "rape." Have you ever thought of this scenario in terms of rape? Do you agree that it is? What difference does our terminology make?

- As an experiment, read Psalm 13, imagining them as the words Bathsheba speaks to God after her rape. What was this experience like for you? Why is it important to recover her voice?

- David presumes that Yahweh is a temple-dwelling God, much like other ancient Near Eastern deities. But Yahweh reveals that he is a God who moves about "in a tent and a tabernacle" (2 Sam 7:6). What does this reveal about God's nature and relationship to humanity?

- The nemesis of a story can be an individual, but more often than not, the greatest nemesis can be the protagonist's own ego. In what ways can our ego be a nemesis? How can it thwart us and draw us off course?

- David is a deeply ambiguous character. He has moments of profound compassion and devotion and moments of unthinkable abuses of power. Why do you think it is important to see and name both sides of David?

- In your own life, what helps you to notice, self-examine, and protect yourself from your own ego? How have you learned to recognize the triggers?

SERMON NOTES

PRAYER CONCERNS

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How would you sign the yearbook of your nemesis?

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Additional Notes:

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Who has been your fool/ prophet?	
What age were you when you knew this person?	
What is a key moment or encounter you remember having with this person?	
What feelings come up when you think of this person?	
What would you say to this person if you saw them today?	
How are they like Nathan & Abigail were for David? How are they different?	

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For Discussion in Life Together Groups and Personal Reflection

- Why do you think kings need prophets? What's the nature of the relationship between the two?

- David's brief confession in 2 Sam 12:13 is later expanded into a lengthy prayer in Psalm 51. If you imagine Psalm 51 as giving us insight into David's heart and mind, what do you learn about David and how he understands himself and his sin?

- What makes for a good confession? Why do you think it's important to confess our wrongdoings?

- Who are the prophetic figures of our time? In what forms/genres are their words conveyed? How is the form/genre of their words critical to their impact?

- In Shakespearean terms, the fool is a character (usually the court jester) who says the things that the protagonist may not want to hear but needs to hear. These characters tend not to be the protagonist's best friend, parent, or spouse. Why do you think this is?

- Nathan speaks truth to (David's) power. What does it require to speak truth to power? Can you think of examples of this?

- Have you ever played (or felt called to play) the fool/prophet in someone's life? How did this turn out? What, if anything, kept you from playing this roll? What, if anything, would you do differently today?

SERMON NOTES

PRAYER CONCERNS

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How would you sign the yearbook of your fool/prophet?

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Additional Notes:

Lecture Notes:

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Think about it...

Who has been your love interest?	
What age were you when you knew this person?	
What is a key moment or encounter you remember having with this person?	
What feelings come up when you think of this person?	
What would you say to this person if you saw them today?	
How are they like God was for David? How are they different?	

Podcast Notes:

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For Discussion in Life Together Groups and Personal Reflection

- It can be argued that God is the true protagonist of the story. Do you see God playing the role of other archetypal characters we've discussed? If so, which ones?

- In your view, to what extent is David "a man after God's own heart"?

- The David of 1 Chronicles is a cleaned-up version of the David of 1-2 Samuel. Which do you prefer and why? What value is there in including both profiles of David within our canon?

- What's been your "ah-ha!" moment from this study? How has it changed the way you understand David, God, and/or yourself?

- Who are David's various love interests in this story? How do they drive the plot?

- If we think of God as the protagonist of the story, do you think his love for David is fully returned? Why or why not?

- When people write your story, who will they say your love interest is?

- How does your love interest being God continue to drive the plot of your life story for the world to witness?

SERMON NOTES

PRAYER CONCERNS

How would you sign the yearbook of your love interest?

Additional Notes:



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