

DEVOTIONAL

SHIPWRECKED
POSSESSIVENESS DAVID AND KING SAUL
OCTOBER 2, 2022

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: Possessiveness is the self-seeking attitude of tightfistedly hanging onto something and determining never share it with anyone else. This damaging mindset is often rooted in pride, envy, or fear. How can such possessiveness damage relationships?

Key Text: “When Saul saw that [David] had great success, he stood in fearful awe of him. 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before them.” (1 Samuel 18:15-16) NOTE: The story of Saul and David appears in 1 Samuel 15-31.

John Newton (1725-1807), the author of *Amazing Grace*, one of the world’s most beloved and enduring Christian hymns, pastored large, esteemed, growing churches for several decades in London. People came from all over to hear him preach, sing his hymns (he wrote and published hundreds of other hymns in addition to *Amazing Grace*), and receive his spiritual counsel. Newton fellowshiped with well-known revivalists of his day such as George Whitefield and John Wesley, taught and strengthened influential people such as the great missionary William Carey and the poet William Cowper, and mentored the abolitionist William Wilberforce. Newton himself became one of Britain’s great antislavery advocates. Newton has a great legacy of pouring his life into others, and his writings and songs are still helping Christians grow in their faith today.

One day, Newton was moved by a humble quote by the Puritan pastor and writer Cotton Mather: “My usefulness was the last idol I was willing to give up. But now I thank the Lord, I can part with that also, and am content to be anything or nothing, so that His wise and holy will may be done!” Newton added his own unassuming thoughts: “May He make me willing to resign it at a moment’s warning; and to sit quiet in my chair or my bed, and rejoice that his work is prospering without me, and that others are serving him better when I can serve him no longer!”

Cotton Mather and John Newton’s self-effacing willingness to give up position and influence if it meant that God’s will and work could continue more effectively sits in stark contrast to the envious, paranoid, angry attitude of Israel’s King Saul of the Old Testament. In today’s lesson, we’ll see how Saul’s possessiveness of his royal position shipwrecked his relationship with David, who God had chosen to succeed Saul as Israel’s king. David showed nothing but loyalty and love to King Saul. Yet, rather than being gracious, Saul attempted to keep himself in power through conniving tactics.

1. Saul’s possessiveness of his authority and rule led him to envy David.

When they first met, David served as Saul’s armor-bearer, the then military leader, and Saul loved David (1 Sam.16:21). But, as David grew in popularity with Israel through great military victories (1 Sam.18:7), and when Saul learned that David would replace him as king (1 Sam.16:1-13), Saul became consumed with envy (1 Sam.18:8-9).

Discuss: According to James 3:16, how is envy the cause of every other sin?

Discuss: According to these verses, what are some consequences of envy: Proverbs 14:30; Ecclesiastes 4:4?

2. Saul's envy of David led to paranoia and fear of David.

Envy rarely stands alone—it is usually accompanied by other destructive attitudes and actions. 1 Samuel 18:15 says that Saul “*stood in fearful awe*” of David—that is, Saul’s envy led to insecurity and paranoia. Although David always acted humbly and respectfully toward Saul, Saul distrusted David and lived in irrational fear.

Discuss: How can envy lead to fear and paranoia?

Discuss: Read Psalm 139:13-14. What are some key words or phrases in Psalm 139:13-14 that emphasize our God-given uniqueness and giftedness? How can Psalm 139:13-14 help us battle against envy and paranoia like Saul displayed?

Discuss: Read Romans 12:15. How can Romans 12:15 help us battle envy?

3. Saul's paranoia and fear of David led to anger and violence toward David.

Saul attempted at least four times to kill David: On two different occasions, Saul threw a spear at David (1 Sam.18:11; 19:10), on one occasion, he told Jonathan and his officers to kill David (1 Sam.19:2), and on another occasion, Saul sent men to David’s house to kill him (1 Sam.19:11).

Discuss: How can emotions like envy, paranoia, and anger lead to destructive behaviors such as being manipulative, controlling, and even abusive?

4. David drew many encouragements from God while dealing with Saul.

David wrote several Psalms while in exile, including Psalm 63. Let’s take a close look at Psalm 63 and consider David’s soul-thirst for God and his confidence that God would ultimately defeat those who had driven him into the wilderness.

- **Discuss:** Read Psalm 63:1. What key words or phrases emphasize David’s longing for God? Why is intimate fellowship with God essential for us to deal with those who have a toxic effect in our relationships?
- **Discuss:** Read Psalm 63:2-8. David emphasizes “*Your power and glory*” (v.2), “*Your steadfast love*” (v.3), “*Your wings*” (v.7), and “*Your right hand*” (v.8). In what ways can each of these characteristics of God provide sustaining strength in our relationships?
- **Discuss:** When have you experienced God’s encouragement and sustaining strength in a bad relationship?

For Further Study:

Free online commentary of 1 Samuel at www.enduringword.com

The Complete Book of Who's Who in the Bible by Philip Comfort and Walter Elwell

“What Can We Learn from David and Saul’s Relationship?” at www.crosswalk.com