

# MERCY MATTERS - 5

## Pursuing God's Own Heart: Lessons From the Life of David

"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult; but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."  
- 1 Peter 3:9

"You never get ahead by getting back."

David continues to evade attempts upon his life, dashing into the desert where he finds refuge among the caves of En Gedi, near the Dead Sea. Several hundred loyalists follow him. So does Saul. And in two dramatic desert scenes (chapters 24 and 26), David models how to give grace to the person who gives nothing but grief. David is learning to discern and obey God's will in spite of the obvious pressures of his circumstances and the attitudes of other people.

### Welcome

What is one of the best practical jokes anyone has pulled on you? How did you try to repay them in kind?

### Word

#### Read 1 Samuel 24:1-22

1. How did David's men assess the circumstances of Saul entering the cave in which they were hiding (verses 1-3)? We often rely on circumstances and the counsel of friends when making important decisions. To what extent are these reliable guides?
2. Rather than take Saul's life, David takes a small part of Saul's robe. David's men think he has done too little; David thinks he has done too much! What caused David to be conscience-stricken in verse 5?
3. Later, Saul asks, "*When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed?*" (vs 19). Who would do such a thing? David would, and more than once (see chapter 26). Why does David show such remarkable restraint in taking vengeance on Saul? As followers of Christ, what are the reasons we're told not to take revenge (for example, in passages like Romans 12:17-21).
4. Describe a time when you responded—either well or poorly—to someone who was the source of grief and difficulty in your life.
5. David assured Saul that he would not harm him, but did not absolve him of wrongdoing (verse 12). David didn't avoid the issue, but he *did* avoid Saul (verse 22). How do these actions clarify what it means (and doesn't mean) to extend mercy and forgiveness?

### Worship

Prepare your devotional time around the theme of God's mercy. Some possible songs: 635—"Freely, Freely," 176—"Lamb of God," 123—"The Steadfast Love of the Lord," 83—"God is So Good."

### Works

Vengeance fixes your attention at life's ugliest moments. Rehearsing and reliving your hurts won't make you a better person. In contrast David faced Saul the same way he faced Goliath—by facing God more so. David's thought life was dominated by God (notice 24:6, 8, 10; 26:9, 23-24). What dominates yours?