



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 6 – Authentic Mercy

For this session, we are going to need a working definition of mercy. You might be familiar with this simple and accurate description: Mercy is *not getting* what you deserve. That's what mercy looks like on the receiving end. Here's the way it looks from the giver's position: Mercy refrains from punishing an offender even though it's within your power to do so.

He didn't know it at the time, but David's escape into the wilderness ended up being the next decade of his life. Israel's hero became the hunted, homeless and alone. But not for long. Word got out and everyone in debt, discontented, or distressed flocked to him like sheep.

Goals for This Session:

- Discover why David's story points to God's plan of salvation.
- Consider the connection between suffering and virtue.
- Examine how we navigate through conflict and broken trusts.
- Pray honest prayers that lead to authentic mercy and reconciliation.

Ice Breaker

"I don't get mad. I get even." "Success is the best revenge." "He had it coming to him."
What other phrases can you think of that reflect how our culture views revenge vs. mercy?

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **1 Samuel 24:1–22** and **26:1–25** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God's ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – Cutting Corners

Read 1 Samuel 24:1–15.

David refuses to kill Saul when he has the opportunity to do so.

1. When Saul came into the cave, David’s men took it as a sign from the Lord. What did they tell David?
 - a. Psalm 54 sheds some light on this strange scene. Prior to this, some men told Saul where David was hiding (1 Samuel 23:19–20). David was surrounded and narrowly escaped. After that incident, David wrote Psalm 54, asking God to vindicate him. In the opinion of his men, what was God giving David permission to do?
 - b. David’s men saw opportunity for revenge, but David would not allow them to kill Saul. What did David see this as an opportunity to do?
 - c. It is tempting to take the first and fastest way out of conflict. Have you ever been hard pressed between vindicating yourself or trusting God to vindicate you? What did you learn through it? What, if anything, would you do differently?
2. When Saul was a safe distance away, David called to him. Until now, David and Saul have had no words since the day David fled for his life. Jonathan defended him; innocent men were slaughtered for helping him; but for the first time David is free to confront Saul himself. Look back over David’s speech to Saul (verses 8–15) and briefly describe how he . . .
 - a. Showed respect:
 - b. Was humble:
 - c. Declared loyalty:
 - d. Defends his integrity:
 - e. Seeks resolution:
3. What stands out most to you about David’s speech? Briefly share why.

4. Have you ever tried to do God's work for Him? When we are tempted to take matters into our own hands, how does God's Word encourage us to hold steady?

Psalm 118:5–6, 8

Psalm 27:13–14

Psalm 37:7–8

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

You, O Lord, are a God of compassion and mercy, slow to get angry
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

Psalm 86:15 NLT

Think it over . . .

How does God's compassion and mercy protect me? In what way does God's compassion and mercy stretch me?

Day Three – Sorry, Not Sorry

Read 1 Samuel 24:16–21.

Saul responds to David with tears.

1. How does Saul react to David's speech? What stands out to you most about Saul's response?
2. Saul's remorse seems genuine, but it was short-lived. In your observation, does his response fall short of a sincere apology? If so, in what way?

3. Offering a sincere apology means: (Check all that apply)

- a. Remorse: I regret that I ... _____
- b. Responsibility: I was wrong for ... _____
- c. Repentance: I want to change how I ... _____
- d. Restitution: I need to make it right by _____
- e. Request: I am asking you please _____
- f. Add your own thought to the list _____

4. Saul's request, "Swear now to me by the Lord . . ." is similar to the pledge between David and Jonathan. What is Saul acknowledging to David?

- a. David promises Saul, just as he had with Jonathan. But something was different about the covenant between David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:15, 42). What was missing from Saul's request, and why?

5. David sought reconciliation. Saul was focused on protecting his name and family future. For the time being it was enough and Saul went home. It was an uneasy truce and David knew it.

Something rises in us when we've been wronged. Like David, we have a choice to make. We don't control the outcome and we cannot change what's been done. How must we respond?

Romans 12:17–19

1 Thessalonians 5:15

1 Peter 3:9–12

Memory Verse

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and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

Psalm 86:15 NLT

Think it over . . .

Am I holding on to an offense or nursing a wound? What am I willing to do to pursue peace?

Day Four – Famous Last Words

Read 1 Samuel 26:1–25.

David spares Saul's life a second time.

1. David's nephew, Abishai, volunteers to go with him into Saul's camp. Abishai wants to kill Saul with his own spear (wouldn't that be poetic justice?) but David doesn't permit it. Is David being foolish? What is he waiting for?
2. David has harsh words for Abner (Saul's uncle and the general of his army). Why would David taunt Abner? Saul was convinced that David was out to harm him, and others fed into that lie (1 Samuel 24:9; 26:19). Is David answering false accusations from Abner? In what way?
3. How does Saul react to David? What stands out to you the most about his response this time?
4. David knew (all too well) how Saul's emotions could flip like a nickel. Saul's promise doesn't fall on deaf ears, but David keeps his distance. Note how David responds (verses 22–24) to Saul's request for him to come home.
5. Mercy isn't blind to guilt. It makes no excuse for sin. But mercy does not punish. Sometimes mercy is what you need to repair and restore what's broken. Sometimes mercy is what you need to accept what is, and move forward.

**Some things,
you just can't fix.
Have mercy.
God does.**

David and Saul would never see each other again, though neither man knew it at the time. Can you see God's mercy over *both men* in their last words to each other? In what way?

Memory Verse

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and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

Psalm 86:15 NLT

Think it over . . .

When is it most difficult for you to show mercy? When is it most necessary?

Day Five – Praying Your Troubles

Saul did everything in his power to kill David, and David did everything in God’s power not to retaliate. Prayer was the only weapon David raised against Saul and he was not passive in praying his troubles.

1. “Save me, O God, by Your name, and **vindicate** me by Your power” (Psalm 54:1).
 - a. Briefly define *vindicate*, or give a practical example of how to trust God to do this.

2. “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise” (Psalm 57:7).
 - a. Briefly explain or give a practical example of what it means to steadfastly pray through our troubles.

3. Do you find yourself digging more into God’s Word and prayer in order to show mercy? Why or why not?

Memory Verse

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and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

Psalm 86:15 NLT

Think it over . . .

How has God been patient and merciful toward you this week? Think of at least two examples.

