

## Prayer

You, Lord Jesus Christ, have created this day. You have presented us with its challenges, difficulties, and excitement, and have offered us its joys, fulfilment and happiness; so may each of us use this day positively and through it all, give glory to You. Bring us to its end in peace, knowing that we have done Your will, and played our part of Your eternal plan. AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: The Family

*Pray for your own family, whether large or small. Give thanks to God for good and happy memories and ask the Lord to help you deal with the troubles of the past in love and peace.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray that governments around the world will respect civil liberties.*
- *Pray for leaders of industry*
- *Give thanks to God for the joy of close friendship in Christ*

## Meditation

Grace; that precious gift of God;

It accepts the limits of the life we have been given,  
And rejoices in the power of faith and hope.

It refrains from being jealous about the wealth of others,  
And uses very gift and talent for the Lord.

It builds us up to live our lives in trust and confidence,  
And makes our sleep a peaceful rest in Christ.

It holds our tongues when we might speak too rashly,  
And bids us speak with love and care to all.

It opens up the promises of God to those who seek Him,  
And works to bring our hearts in line with His.

It asks us probing questions when we stray from godliness,  
And cautions us against the wiles of evil.

Grace of Christ, come fill me.

## Bible Study - 1 Samuel 17:55-58

<sup>55</sup> *When Saul saw David go out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, 'Abner, whose son is this young man?' Abner said, 'As your soul lives, O king, I do not know.'* <sup>56</sup> *The king said, 'Inquire whose son the stripling is.'* <sup>57</sup> *On David's return from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand.* <sup>58</sup> *Saul said to him, 'Whose son are you, young man?' And David answered, 'I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.'*

## Review

The story of David's early life is complicated! We have followed David now from when he was found by Samuel and covertly anointed king of all Israel (1 Sam 16:1f.), to his introduction at court. Then the scene changed to the battlefield where, as a youth sent to supply his brothers in the army, the young David first observed the predicament of the disheartened Israelite army. With great personal courage, trust in God, presence of mind

and agility, he overcame the enemy, Goliath, and thus secured a victory against the Philistine army which, as was the case in those days, saved his nation from rape, indiscriminate slaughter, eviction from their lands and servitude to Philistine overlords.

This is quite a story in itself, and makes a good 'storyboard' for a Hollywood movie (yet to be made)! But the story is only just beginning, and as in many films we see today, the early flashes of storyline and action whet our appetite for what is to come.

On the face of it, today's reading presents us with a quandary, for when King Saul asked 'who is this young man?' the logic of the storyline tells us that Saul must have surely known David already, because he was a court musician who had previously played in his presence (1 Sam 16:23)! Either Saul did not recognise David as the young musician who helped him when he was manic (and this could be well be understandable), or today's passage is an example of how that different parts of the ancient story of David were put together in a way which does not reflect our modern interest in things happening 'in order'. Personally, I do not think it wise to be too side-tracked by this. I believe the scribes who put this story had a purpose, and they appear to have felt at liberty to put the parts of the ancient story wherever they wished so that the spiritual story of David was best presented. Their eyes were on spiritual consistency, not historical time-frame. Today, we should allow the Holy Spirit to use this text to speak the spiritual messages of scripture to us and not be bound by our own ideas of how a story-line should be made up.

Nevertheless, at the centre of this story is this amazing and enigmatic figure of David. He was still a lad, and described in this text as a 'stripling' (17:56), an obedient son, a hard worker, an experienced shepherd, a keen observer of everything around him both natural and human, a skilled, God-fearing musician, and, more to the point, a national hero who held, quite literally, the head of his enemy in his hand! Moreover, he had won over the people of Israel for saving their lives! I still remain amazed that Hollywood has not filmed this great story!

For us who read this all today, the question remains 'what is God saying to us in this story?' The amazing characteristics of David are a powerful witness to us; he already demonstrates the key qualities of service and obedience which will enable him to become a great servant of God as the King of Israel in his later years. However, the real intrigue is this; how will this young man, already anointed by Samuel as King, eventually become the true King of Israel? And what will the young pretender do in the uncertain times ahead while King Saul still lives, before he can become King?

In any other nation of those days, if a young lad such as David had been anointed by a 'prophet' (there were some in most ancient nations), he would have used his access to the court of the old king to plot his assassination (see Judges 3 for a story of this kind)! With Goliath's head in his hand David had no need to fear anyone. When Abner, the commander of the army, introduced him to King Saul, it was probably a very tense moment. The King had let his people down by not taking on Goliath himself, and now he was now faced by the man who, in effect, took his place on the battlefield. In the manner of those days, I reckon that Abner expected David to take out his sword and dispatch Saul, whereupon Abner would have raised David's hand and all Israel would have shouted 'Hail King David!' However, that was not God's way, and this is the clear message of this passage. David accepted the authority of the anointed King of Israel although he had failed, and we learn an important truth that the ways of the world are not God's ways!

David has made a good start, not merely as a potential King of Israel, but as a servant of the Lord, and his story is there to offer us guidance and comment. David demonstrates natural gifts used in God's service with a clear desire to serve above all else; he has an ear for God's voice and the ability to know when to do things for God and when to submit to his elders (I stress, both of these). At a time in the life of the church when people too easily look with awe at the apparently effective worldly methods of organisation management to find ways of solving the church's problems, we would do well to pay attention instead to divine guidance and the principles of service, as taught in this story. Certainly, Hollywood could make much of all this if it so wished!

## Questions (for use in groups)

1. Which characteristics of David are, in your opinion, relevant to leadership within the church today?
2. Does this story tell us any more about David than what has been discussed in the study?
3. In what ways would the story of God's people would have been different if David had assumed authority after killing Goliath?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*Leadership is an important issue for all God's people, and there is a great deal about it in the Old Testament.. This passage tells me that we do not have to look too far to find godly principles of leadership within the Old Testament which can be applied today and offer us better guidance than we can find anywhere else. If you want a good leader, find a David.*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *What has featured in your mind as you have read this text? Write it down and then pray about it over a period of time such as a week.*
- *Look at the leadership of your own church and assess whether you feel it is built on godly principles. Talk to the leaders themselves about this.*
- *Have you longed to be in leadership, to be a 'David'? Bring this to the Lord in prayer; few people are like David, so ask the Lord to reveal your true calling.*

## Final Prayer

You, Lord God, are my leader; You are my inspiration and my guide. You are one who goes before, alongside and behind me, and You are there when I need You in all the circumstances of life. Do not leave me, for I rely on your faithfulness. Bless me, Lord God: AMEN