

Worshiping God in the Wilderness

THE PURSUIT OF GOD: THE LIFE OF DAVID · 1 SAMUEL 21-23; PSALM 63
JUNE 29, 2025 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

"David stayed in the wilderness strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph. Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands." (1 Samuel 23:14)

David's Flight to Elude King Saul

- David's flight to Nob, where he is offered provisions by the priest, Ahimelek, and then to the Philistine city of Gath, where he feigns madness (1 Samuel 21)
- David flees to Adullam, then Mizpah in Moab, then to the forest of Hereth; King Saul kills the family of Ahimelek (1 Samuel 22)
- David is led by God to protect Keilah, moves from place to place, hides in the Judean wilderness, and En-Gedi (1 Samuel 23)

David's Unstable Circumstances

- David is fleeing for his life
- David is moving from place to place
- David receives the distressed and discontent who gather around him

David's Stability in Instability

- Psalms written during this time (possibly 7, 59, 56, 34, 52, 63, 54, 18, 57, 142)
- David's call to God in Psalm 63

Pursuing God in Unstable Circumstances

- Naming our circumstances for what they are
- Remembering God amidst our circumstances
- Choosing to be satisfied in God in unstable circumstances
- Finding streams in the wilderness through worship (Isaiah 43:19)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When have you faced opposition that utterly overwhelmed you? What did you do?
2. This week we continue our summer sermon series, "The Pursuit of God: The Life of David" by exploring David's life on the run from King Saul in wilderness places. This is recorded in 1 Samuel 21-23. Begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through the Scripture.
3. 1 Samuel 21 traces David's flight from Saul to Nob, where he is offered provisions by the priest, Ahimelek, and then to the Philistine city of Gath, where David feigns madness.

Read this entire chapter to gain meaningful background to David's sense of urgency and need. What stands out to you about David's journey here?

4. 1 Samuel 22 continues the telling of David's challenging travels to elude the pursuit of King Saul. Read chapter 22. What stands out to you about the people who gather around David in verses 1-5?
5. How would you describe the state of Saul's royal court as described in verses 6-19?
6. How would you describe the state of David's community as described in verses 20-23?
7. If you had to choose between living in King Saul's or David's entourage, which would you choose and why?
8. 1 Samuel 23 brings focus to Saul's pursuit of David and David's ongoing escape from Saul. Read chapter 23. What are some of the defining characteristics of how David makes decisions and acts as outlined in this chapter?
9. How would you describe David's relationship with God? How might that be an example to us today?
10. Now read Psalm 63. How might the events of 1 Samuel 21-23 have shaped David's prayer here?
11. What is one thing God speaking to you personally through this week's study about the connection between our spiritual life and our circumstances? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and consider sharing your thoughts with someone this week.

DIG DEEPER:

- Memorize Psalm 63, either a verse from it or the entire psalm
- Consider writing your own "psalm" that reflects your current circumstances as a means for reaching out to God. Here is a guide: mwerickson.com/2025/06/26/write-your-own-psalm-a-spiritual-formation-exercise/.
- Explore some or all of these resources:
 - Lifeway Publishing, "Map: David Flees from Saul": explorethebible.lifeway.com/blog/adults/map-david-flees-from-saul/
 - Bible Project, "The Book of Psalms," in How to Read the Bible: bibleproject.com/videos/book-of-psalms/
 - Vinnie Zarletti, "Psalm 63 (O God, You Are My God)": commonhymnal.com/songs/psalm-63-o-god-you-are-my-god