

April 16 — He Cares

READ

1 Samuel 22:1-23:12

Psalm 57

Psalm 142

Psalm 52

Psalm 142:4-5, "I have no refuge: no one cares for my life. I cry to you, Lord; I say, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.'"

THINK

"No one cares for my life." Have you ever felt that way? Alone in a crowd, shouting into the void and wondering if anyone would even notice if you disappeared? If you even matter to anyone at all?

David was experiencing such pain as he penned Psalm 142. He was hiding out in a cave, merely trying to survive. King Saul's men were hunting him down — would he make it out alive? Picture the scene: It's likely cold and damp with all hard surfaces. There's definitely nowhere comfortable to lay his head. Creepy, crawly critters are his only company. Yikes! So, imagine how David felt — isolated, trapped, and alone, with seemingly no escape.

That sense of being alone, abandoned, and unloved is one of the worst feelings in the world. And it breaks God's heart when we feel this way because He cares about every facet of our being. It may not always feel like it, but His constancy, His love, and His truth are more enduring than any emotion or circumstance. He is a refuge in times of trouble, a friend through thick and thin, a Father we can always rely upon.

He gave up His one and only Son so that He could have a relationship with you. And if you've accepted Him into your life, you never have to be alone. So, right now, say aloud to yourself: *"God loves me. He cares about me. I can come to Him about anything."* It's true! You can at any time and in any place, and He'll respond. He's always with you; He loves you. He cares!

PRAY

Lord, I come to You as I am. I cry out to you, my God. You know my hurt, my struggles, and my failures, but none of it compares to You. Thank You for Your unconditional love, that You are my refuge, my comfort, and my peace. Amen!

April 17 — Learning to Behave in a Cave

READ

1 Samuel 23:13-25:44

Psalm 54

1 Samuel 24:4-8, *“The men said, This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’” Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe. Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. He said to his men, ‘The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the LORD. With these words, David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way. Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, My lord the king! When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.’”*

THINK

Once again, David was on the run from crazy King Saul, hiding out in a cave with 600 men. Saul’s troops were closing in when David got a lucky break. Saul entered the cave alone, unaware that 601 pairs of eyes were fixed on him. David’s men were chomping at the bit to attack, but the seasoned warrior snuck up and merely snipped off a bit of the king’s clothing. Clueless to his potential imminent demise, Saul exited the cave unscathed. But here is where we see why God called David “a man after His own heart.” David felt bad about what he’d done. What?! This lunatic had been hunting him down like an animal, and he felt guilty about a little secret robe alteration?

There are several great lessons to unpack from this event! First, we see David do something that Saul had trouble with — he waited on God’s timing. Although he knew God had anointed him to be the future king, he understood it wasn’t his place to take the throne by force. He wanted God to orchestrate the events for him to do so.

Second, David refused to kill Saul even when he had the golden opportunity because he respected God’s chosen leader. He understood that God places all authorities over us and, as long as Saul was king, he would honor that.

Third, we must applaud David’s ability to let go of anger and resentment despite Saul making his life a living nightmare. He proved that, although we can’t control the actions of others, we can control our response. This was a great show of godliness before his men!

We’ve all struggled, at times, with waiting on God’s timing, submitting to authority, and letting go of anger towards those who’ve wronged us. So, apply these powerful lessons, and you, too, can be a “David,” a person after God’s own heart!

PRAY

God, I want to be a person after Your own heart. Help me apply these lessons to live out Your best and bring honor to Your name. Amen.

April 18 — Desperately Seeking

READ

1 Samuel 26:1-29:11

1 Chronicles 12:19

Psalm 56

1 Samuel 28:5-7, *“When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets. Saul then said to his attendants, ‘Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her.’”*

THINK

F.E.A.R. — **F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal — can make us act a bit crazy. Suspicion and paranoia take over and, in desperation, we seek comfort and answers in the wrong places.

Saul spent a lifetime relying on the prophet, Samuel, for answers and direction. When Samuel died, Saul experienced the deafening silence of God. Separated from God’s wisdom and direction, Saul gave in to fear and took matters into his own hands as the Philistine army loomed large. In his quest for answers, he summoned a medium — though God despised such practices. But he didn’t find the comfort he desired.

Whose spirit was Saul trying to conjure up? None other than God’s man, Samuel! Not through the medium’s ability, but by God’s divine power, Samuel did indeed appear with a final message of rebuke and consequence. Imagine the blood draining from Saul’s face and his heart beating through his chest as the deceased prophet reminded Saul that he was God’s enemy — with the added fact that he would die and Israel would be defeated the next day.

Like Saul, we can find ourselves succumbing to fear and looking for answers in the wrong places when we can’t hear God’s voice. Nonetheless, we simply can’t afford to sidestep God’s will and seek truth elsewhere. We’ll quickly realize that disobedience never pays, and God’s direction is always worth the wait! So, don’t allow FEAR to overrule your trust in Him. Even when God seems silent, we can find comfort in His Word. Therefore, **seek** God’s will first and **choose** obedience. **Trust** that no matter what opposing force looms large before you, He may not take you where you think you need to go, but He’ll always lead you in the right direction.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your wisdom and guidance. Help me to wait on You when I am unsettled by fear. Let me walk in the peace that only You can bring in times of uncertainty. In Jesus ’name, Amen.

April 19 — Better, Not Bitter

READ

1 Samuel 30:1-31:13
1 Chronicles 12:20-22
1 Chronicles 10:1-14
1 Chronicles 9:40-44
2 Samuel 4:4
2 Samuel 1:1-27

2 Samuel 1:11-12, *“David and his men tore their clothes in sorrow when they heard the news. They mourned and wept and fasted all day for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the Lord’s army and the nation of Israel because they had died by the sword that day.”*

THINK

Has there been a time in your life when you chose to be better instead of bitter?

In today’s reading, a lot transpires. Battles are won and lost, Israel's first king and his son die, and David mourns his dearest friend, Jonathan, and his one-time greatest enemy, Saul.

When Saul was anointed to be Israel’s first king, he humbly — and almost bashfully — took the throne. But once in power, he allowed jealousy and bitterness against David to rule his heart.

David chose the opposite path. Saul had made his life miserable, causing him to flee and hide out in caves — fearing for his life. But in the end, David didn't celebrate the death of his unhinged successor or the taking of his throne. What was his response? He mourned. Through it all, David allowed himself to become better instead of bitter. How was this possible? His ability to discern the correct response came from his amazing confidence and trust in God’s almighty power to work all things for good.

Oftentimes, we face circumstances that don’t turn out the way we’d hoped. That’s life! How we respond to such situations is a choice. Maybe you've been mistreated in the past or have felt like the walls were pressing in on you from all sides, causing bitterness to swell in your heart. In such moments, remember: God works through all things for our good and His glory. Choose to grow from the experience. Decide to be better, not bitter.

PRAY

Dear God, Thank You for this reminder for me to become better, not bitter. The next time such a situation arises, help me make the right choice and place my trust in You. Amen.

April 20 — Anointed

READ

2 Samuel 2:1-3:5

1 Chronicles 3:1-4a

2 Samuel 23:8-39

1 Chronicles 11:10-47

2 Samuel 2:1, 3-4, *“After this David inquired of the Lord, ‘Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?’ And the Lord said to him, ‘Go up.’ David said, ‘To which shall I go up?’ And He said, ‘To Hebron.’ ... And David brought up his men who were with him, everyone with his household, and they lived in the towns of Hebron. And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.”*

THINK

Per God’s instruction, David was first anointed to be Israel’s king by the prophet Samuel. But, he was still a young shepherd caring for his father’s flock, so it was a role that he didn’t fulfill immediately. From the time he was anointed to the time he took the throne, he dealt with numerous trials, fought many battles, and lived on the run under the threat of his homicidal father-in-law, Saul, Israel’s first king. (Imagine the awkward conversations at those family dinners!)

In the time between David’s first anointing and becoming king, he continued to both seek the Lord and obey His commands. Within this waiting period, he was anointed a second time — an assurance that God’s plan for his life would still come to pass. So, David trusted in God’s timing; he wholeheartedly lived to do what God wanted him to do — whether it was in a pasture, on the battlefield, or even hiding in a cave. He sought to fulfill God’s plans and purposes while he waited to be king.

God wants to use us in a multitude of ways. Though we may sometimes have big opportunities, He often uses us in ordinary day-to-day circumstances such as sharing and showing Christ’s love to others or serving Him within the church. What is God calling you to do right now? You were anointed, set apart for His service, the moment you accepted Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Therefore, seek God’s will, obey His commands, and, like David, be patient as you trust in His perfect timing!

PRAY

Father, I trust that You have a unique plan and purpose for my life! I am here to serve You in any way possible — big or small. In Your amazing love, You have called me by name, forgiven my sins, and changed my life. Thank You, Lord! Be glorified in me! Amen.

April 21 — When Life Gets Messy

READ

2 Samuel 3:6-4:12

2 Samuel 3:21, *“Then Abner said to David, ‘Let me go at once and assemble all Israel for my lord the king, so that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires.’”*

THINK

Proverbs 14:4 says: “Where there are no oxen, the trough is clean; but increase comes by the strength of an ox.” You might be thinking, “What does that have to do with today’s reading?” Simply put: Life can be messy. King David certainly found that to be true.

Here’s the backstory: King Saul was dead, and many people refused to believe that David was the rightful successor — even though God had chosen him to be the next king and he had been anointed by the prophet, Samuel. “Shouldn’t the throne go to Saul’s surviving son, Ishbosheth?” they argued. This debate led to a lot of controversy and Abner led the opposition.

Behind the scenes lay false accusations, jealousy, murderous revenge, and power-hungry alliances threatening to derail David’s throne — and his public image. But through all the messiness, he trusted God and strived to do the right thing. He chose not to seek revenge on his former enemy, and, instead, called for people to mourn King Saul’s untimely death. Eventually, Abner came to make peace. Due to David’s wisdom and discernment, he escaped the messiness and came out clean, winning approval from both sides for his handling of such unfortunate events.

So, the next time your life gets messy, remember David, forge ahead, and trust that God has a plan no matter how muddy it gets along the way.

PRAY

Lord, I surrender my life to You. Guide me and illuminate my path according to Your will. Use me as a vessel of Your love as I fulfill Your purpose, no matter how messy life gets. Amen.

April 22 — When Good Intentions Go Awry

READ

2 Samuel 5:1-13
1 Chronicles 11:1-9
1 Chronicles 12:23-40
2 Samuel 5:17-25
1 Chronicles 14:8-17
1 Chronicles 3:4b
1 Chronicles 14:1-2
1 Chronicles 13:1-14
2 Samuel 6:1-11

2 Samuel 6:5-8, *“David and all the people of Israel were celebrating before the Lord, singing songs, and playing all kinds of instruments ... But when they arrived at the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out his hand and steadied the Ark of God. Then the Lord’s anger was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him dead because of this. ... David was angry that the Lord’s anger burst out against Uzzah...”*

THINK

Anointed king over all Israel, David dominated two crucial battles giving all the credit for Israel’s wins to God. He was now more powerful than ever and feared among other nations. So, after a rocky start, things were moving along quite swimmingly for the new king.

After conquering Jerusalem, he chose to reside there and make it a central place of worship for all of Israel. To do so, he decided to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the city because it signified God’s true presence and glory among His chosen people. He made plans for it to be a festive day of celebration, but he did not take care to follow God’s law regarding how to handle and transport the Ark of the Covenant.

The day of festivities was interrupted by tragedy when Uzzah reached out and touched the Ark. Even though his intentions were good – he wanted to keep it from falling – his disobedience resulted in judgment. Uzzah fell dead, and the Israelites came face to face with God’s holiness. They were again reminded that true worship doesn’t come from good intentions but obedience.

We can fall into the same trap. We can rationalize, “What God really meant to say was....” Or “I’m sure God wouldn’t mind in this case if I...” We justify our decisions by our circumstances and feelings. We hope that our “good intentions” will excuse our disobedience. But, we must remember that God is God and we are not. He is holy, and obedience is always the best form of worship. And when we worship Him with our obedience, we will experience His blessing.

PRAY

Lord, I'm so thankful I can approach you as a loving Father, but I also worship you as a holy God. Guide me towards obedience as I seek to live out Your will. I want to honor You in all I do! Amen.