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1 SAMUEL 18:13-19:24

1 Samuel Series

[PRAYER] We lift up now these requests to you. We know you are a physician, the great physician who wants to heal and often uses the challenges that we face to draw us closer to you, draw us closer in relationships to help us understand the reality of life. So Lord, we just want to lift up these folks to you. Lift up Caroline who's with us today that you'd help her as she goes through this chemotherapy in the next six weeks and radiation and that you use the medical procedures to bring about complete healing in her. We pray for Paddy with his brain tumor that you would use that situation in some powerful ways to represent and demonstrate your power. We also pray for Bruce and the chemo and the cancer treatments that he's going to be going through that you'll be working in his life. We pray for Tess who's with us this morning and her eye duct challenge. We pray that you'd heal that for her. We thank you for Mavis being here and we ask that you would bless her in the loss of her family members in the last few weeks. So we're asking, Lord, that you would do those works in each one of our lives and other requests that I've maybe forgotten or that are present in people's lives. We ask that you'd be doing a deeper work in our hearts. We come before you. We love you. We trust you. The struggles that we face are real ones. We believe in you and we believe in prayer, and we know that you do amazing things. So Lord, work your power and your might in our lives today. As we look at your word, use it to speak to us and teach us new things about our lives and what you would have for us. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

The greatest pain and pleasure in your life will be experienced in the context of relationship. Maybe you don't have your pen out yet, but you're going to want to write that down. So I'll say it again. This is a really important statement, I would suggest. The greatest pain and pleasure in your life will be experience in the context of relationships. Those relationships that we experience are very important in our lives and they mean a lot to us and who we are.

The basic relationship is between two people. When that relationship is strong, that's great. But when that relationship becomes challenged because of a conflict in that relationship, then the relationship itself becomes unstable. When a relationship becomes unstable it wants to draw something into it in order to stabilize it, usually another person.

For example, let's say two children are in conflict and so one of them says, "Mommy, Billy left the light on in the bathroom again." He's tattling in order to bring a third person into an unstable relationship in order to bring some control into that situation.

I was talking to Frank. He's a biologist, a doctor who attends here with us. He is working on some vaccines, actually two big projects for vaccines. So I was asking about unstable molecules.

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Some of you would know much more about this than I do about chemistry. But he was telling me about ozone. That ozone is an unstable molecule and so it's looking for something else to bind it to in order to be more stable.

I think in a similar way relationships are like that. So I want you to be thinking about your relationships that you have today because we all go through them. When we're in a relationship with someone and that relationship becomes challenged and it becomes unstable in some ways, even in some minor ways, then there is a common thing that we do is triangle somebody else in. Triangles aren't necessarily bad. But when two people gossip with each other about a third person and they have no intention of doing something about it, then it doesn't help the situation, but you have a triangle.

I want to talk about those triangles and I want you to see what happens because there are good ways and bad ways to deal with triangles. If someone is a selfish person, then they will use a triangle to gather other people to help them have more control in the relationship and dominate someone else. That's a very negative triangle and damages relationships. Not only the relationship that's there, but other relationships that that person experiences. However if you are a peacemaker, what a peacemaker does is go into an unstable relationship or a challenging relationship and brings peace into that situation. That's a helpful triangle.

Triangles are very common. I was going to say we experience them every day, but that might be a little too much. But we experience them regularly. When you have a problem and you go get some help from somebody else, that helpful person can either triangle in in a good way or in an unhelpful way. Furthermore, when we seek help from someone else for a challenge we're having, we can either do it in an unhelpful or helpful way. We're going to see that now in our passage.

I want you to turn with me to 1 Samuel 18-19 because as we go through this passage I want to point out some triangles that exist in the dynamic in this passage. We're going to see David and Jonathan and Saul, and in the midst of this we're going to learn more about our personal relationships. I trust that God will speak to you and give you wisdom about how to handle relationships that you're involved in. Those won't necessarily be family relationships. Maybe they're work relationships or roommate issues or some other dynamic that you're involved in at school where there are challenging relationships that need to be addressed. There is some great stuff in here for all of us.

Let's look at 1 Samuel 18. Pick it up in verse 13. *So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. In everything he did he had great success, because the Lord was with him.* I really like that. He had success because the Lord was with him. It's really encouraging when we're moving in a direction and God provides that success for us. That's what's happening in David's life.

Verse 15 – *When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him.* So now we're getting insight into Saul. Several times throughout the passage we're going to get into Saul's heart. We know what he's thinking because the passage tells us. We know what he's feeling because the

passage tells us. Saul was afraid of him. *But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns.*

Now Saul had just witnessed the killing of Goliath, an amazing feat that provided victory for the nation of Israel, yet Saul was dominated by his own personal fears and jealousy. He becomes very selfish in the way that he handles life situations, so he creates conflict in the midst of this.

I want to suggest that life is complicated. You probably are involved at work with someone or you know someone who's selfish. The selfishness creates discord in relationships and you sometimes feel like a victim in the midst of that because people who are selfish generate conflict. David was working for a tyrant.

Let's look at the next part of the story. Verse 17 – *Saul said to David, “Here is my older daughter Merab. I will give her to you in marriage; only serve me bravely and fight the battles of the Lord.” For Saul said to himself (and notice we're getting an insight into his heart right now), “I will not raise a hand against him. Let the Philistines do that!”*

So Saul is trying to get David killed and he's using a triangle to do that. “I'm going to get my daughter as his wife so he'll feel obligated to me to go out and fight these battles, and he'll eventually get killed by the Philistines.” Do you see what he's trying to do in there? He's trying to use a family member, interestingly enough, to do this.

Humanly speaking, Saul should have realized that David was the greatest opportunity, humanly speaking, for him to have to secure kingdom, to win the battles, and so on. But instead he turns his attention to pursuing David and killing him. So he tries to manipulate – that's a word used when we talk about triangles. People manipulate other people to try to get to some selfish end. That's what's happening here. They manipulate the situation. He's doing it using his own family member to make it happen. That's got to be the worst triangle in my mind, that someone would mistreat or use a family member to get the upper hand with someone else.

But notice David's response in verse 18. *But David said to Saul, “Who am I, and what is my family or my clan in Israel, that I should become the king's son-in-law?” So when the time came for Merab, Saul's daughter, to be given to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel of Meholah.*

Now Saul's daughter Michal was in love with David, and when they told Saul about it, he was pleased. “I will give her to him,” he thought, “so that she may be a snare to him and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.” So Saul said to David, “Now you have a second opportunity to become my son-in-law.”

So Saul is selfish. That's the first thing we got to see here because selfish people manipulate other people. Selfish people use situations like this to generate conflict and then they'll bring a third person in to make that happen. Some of you are living this right now in your work situations, home situations. It's just a terrible place to be. He's using, he's manipulating family members to get personal gain.

We see it today in custody battles. It's a sad thing. We have a family where you've got parents who split and now they're fighting over the kids, so they say things to the child about the other parent to try to gain the upper hand and gain control in the situation. It's very common and it's very painful and it's hard on the kids. It's wrong, but selfish people do that.

Now I want you to know that when you are triangled into a relationship for whatever reason...say you are, because someone comes to you and say, "Let me tell you this story about such and such that happened," so now all of a sudden you're triangled in to this challenging triangle situation between two other people. You're being challenged and brought into the situation. You can go in either poorly or you can go in successfully.

You go in poorly by taking sides with someone – "Oh yeah, that other person did terrible" and create worse conflict. Or you can come in as a peacemaker or a counselor or a coach. If you think I'm going to get triangled in, I need to be a counselor or a coach.

Two boys fighting come to mom tattling: "He left the light on in the bathroom." "You're right, he did leave the light on in the bathroom again. Why don't you be a servant and go turn it off." "Focusing on making things better instead of making things worse – that's what it means to go into a triangle in a healthy way.

Now Saul is going to do the same thing with his attendants. So Saul says, "Take my other daughter. She can be your wife." What he wants to do is create obligation, you see. "If he has my daughter, he's going to feel obligated to serve me more and more. Therefore he's going to go out and fight these battles I keep telling him to fight and he's going to get killed" That's Saul's thinking and now Saul wants to manipulate the situation to get David to agree to that.

So verse 22 says this: *Then Saul ordered his attendants* (in other words, I can't get through to David, so I'm going to triangle in my attendants to try to get them to go to David): *"Speak to David privately and say, 'Look, the king likes you, and his attendants all love you; now become his son-in-law.'"* *They repeated these words to David. But David said, "Do you think it is a small matter to become the king's son-in-law? I'm only a poor man and little known."*

When Saul's servants told him what David had said, Saul replied, "Say to David, 'The king wants no other price for the bride than a hundred Philistine foreskins, to take revenge on his enemies.'" *Saul's plan was to have David fall by the hands of the Philistines.*

So we get this insight again into Saul's heart. He wants David to go out and fight these Philistines, which were brave warriors known for their fierce battle tactics, and he wants to get him killed. So he wants him out there.

I know you're distracted by the foreskin thing. Let's talk about that for a minute so you understand what's happening in the passage.

Circumcision was something that was common in Israel, but it was not just in Israel. It was common outside in the other surrounding countries as well. The Amorites, for examples, were one of Israel's enemies and they observed the right of circumcision. The Israelites observed

circumcision differently in that it was a religious emblem for them. It was a statement that this child was now part of the covenant community, the faithful community of believers. So the circumcision meant something very significant. Unlike for Americans who get circumcised, it doesn't really mean anything except for some health benefits that we sometimes believe are there. The Amorites had a tradition that it was a right of passage for young men that they would get circumcised. So now you have groups of people out there, some are circumcised, some are not.

The important thing in this story here is that the Philistines are fierce warriors and the Amorites were not. The Amorites didn't really know how to fight. They lost battles all the time. But the Philistines were known for their fierce fighting strategies and Saul wanted to make sure that David was killing the right people. He's going after these guys, the Philistines, because he wanted David to die. So he gives him the hardest situation. So what's he going to say? Bring him back ears? No. So he says bring me back foreskin. So that's what he does. So you don't get distracted, that's what's happening here.

David decides that this is something he can do and this is why. I'm going to earn this wife. I'm not going to be under obligation to Saul for further things. He doesn't want to be locked into this manipulation, so he says, "Okay, I can do this. I'm going to go pay the price and I'm going to earn this."

So this is what he does in verse 26. *When the attendants told David these things, he was pleased to become the king's son-in-law. So before the allotted time elapsed, David took his men with him and went out and killed two hundred (remember the bride price was one hundred) Philistines and brought back their foreskins. They counted out the full number to the king so that David might become the king's son-in-law. Then Saul gave him his daughter Michal in marriage.*

When Saul realized that the Lord was with David and that his daughter Michal loved David, Saul became still more afraid of him, and he remained his enemy the rest of his days.

I want you to see that David was given a price of one hundred and he decided to give two hundred. What he wants to do is not be under obligation. I'm not going to let you manipulate me into this, is what he's saying. I'm going to break this triangle right away, and that's what he tries to do in the midst of that situation.

It's interesting in the passage we're told here what Saul's intentions are, what his motives are, what he's thinking in his heart. We know what's going on. We don't get any of that about David here. We certainly get it in the Psalms when we read the Psalms, but here all David is doing is doing the right thing. He just keeps doing what's right.

Sometimes that's all we can do in the midst of these difficult situations. We just have to keep doing the right thing, even though we are dealing with people. When it's in the office we don't call it manipulation, we call it politics. It's office politics where people are trying to get in and around and manipulate the situation so they can get a bigger piece of the pie or whatever it might be.

Verse 30 – *The Philistine commanders continued to go out to battle, and as often as they did, David met with more success than the rest of Saul’s officers, and his name became well known.*

Now we’re going to enter another part of the story and we’re going to see another triangle. This is a positive triangle. I just want you to see it in operation here because it illustrates how we can find ourselves in good or bad triangles. This happens to be a good one.

Verse 1 of chapter 19 – *Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan had taken a great liking to David and warned him, “My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding and stay there. I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I’ll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out.”*

Verse 4. Notice what Jonathan does. *Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, “Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The Lord won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?”*

Verse 6 – *Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: “As surely as the Lord lives, David will not be put to death.”* Somehow in the midst of this, Jonathan was able to persuade his father to change his position when it comes to David.

Verse 7 – *So Jonathan called David and told him the whole conversation. He brought him to Saul, and David was with Saul as before.* So the relationship is restored in this moment. David is back in the palace; he’s going to be playing his music for Saul when Saul gets depressed. David is still going to be one of his soldiers. He’s in the palace as before.

So Jonathan was able to, and this is a really powerful statement about Jonathan’s ability, but I would suggest that we as Christians think differently than non-Christians, right? And as Christians we have the ability, we have spiritual resources that other people don’t have. We can come into a situation and often we can bring peace that other people can’t bring. We don’t enter into the office politics. We aren’t trying to step on other people and manipulate the situation to move forward. When there’s bickering going on in the student body, we’re careful to come in and be a peacemaker, not to try to enhance or contribute to the division in the situation. That’s what’s happening in the midst of this. Jonathan is successful at being a peacemaker here and things seem to be working out. Until we get to verse 8.

Once more (we don’t know how long there was peace there in the household) war broke out, and David went out and fought the Philistines. He struck them with such force that they fled before him.

But an evil spirit from the Lord came on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand. It’s just interesting what’s in your hand. Is it a spear or is a worship instrument? I just find that fascinating. While David was playing the lyre, Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his

spear, but David eluded him as Saul drove the spear into the wall. That night David made good his escape.

People who are selfish throw spears. I would suggest that people who are angry and afraid inside and live with that, when they get in a conflict in a situation, use their anger and fear to try to manipulate the situation. That's why it's so important for us as individuals to get it together when it comes to this anger and fear in our own lives. If our relationship with God is secure and we're not bound by our own personal anger and fear, then we won't be tempted to take that into a relationship and create disharmony or conflict in that.

David's in a difficult place. He's trying to do the right thing, but it's messy. I would suggest that many of us live in messy world situations, things you can't get rid of. They're part of your family or part of your larger family and you see those things taking place. Or you work with these people or they're in your student body. It's a challenging place to try to figure it all out. It's messy. But we have resources that God has provided to us that allow us to be stable in our relationship with God, even in the midst of the challenges.

One of the things David is doing here, I think, is David did not get infected by Saul's selfishness. That's always the danger that takes place. That we'll get infected by the selfishness of other people in the midst of the politics and it will start turning us into Sauls. Be careful. We don't want to be Sauls. We want to be Davids.

There are some people you just can't please in life and we find ourselves trapped in those places that are difficult. We can become like Saul when we become cynical, we become critical, or competitive. But David didn't fire back. He was in an unfair situation. People are throwing things at him, throwing darts, trying to make their point, and that's what happens in life. People get mad at us.

David is holding a guitar or a lyre, a musical instrument, a worship instrument, and Saul is holding his spear because of what's going on inside of the heart. If you've got a bunch of anger and fear inside of your heart, that's what you're going to be holding so that when conflict comes, that's what comes out. But David had worship in his heart. He had practice being a worshiper, so he doesn't have the same stuff that comes out and he doesn't want to get sucked into the challenge.

Well Saul has not been able to get rid of David by sending him out on the field, so he decides he's deliberately going to put him to death himself. Verse 11 – *Saul sent men to David's house to watch it and to kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, warned him, "If you don't run for your life tonight, tomorrow you'll be killed." So Michal let David down through a window, and he fled and escaped. Then Michal took an idol and laid it on the bed, covering it with a garment and putting some goats' hair at the head.*

I just want to point out that Saul's intent was to use Michal as a triangle to get the best of David. But people who do that, people who are selfish in that regard often not only hurt themselves, hurt other people, but they don't get in the end the thing that they wish they would get. Sometimes it looks like they're ahead. They get the raise, they take advantage, they make other people

enemies of other people. But in the end it doesn't work for him. Michal does not support him in this.

When Saul sent the men to capture David, Michal said, "He is ill." Then Saul sent the men back to see David and told them, "Bring him up to me in his bed so that I may kill him." But when the men entered, there was the idol in the bed, and at the head was some goats' hair.

Saul said to Michal, "Why did you deceive me like this and send my enemy away so that he escaped?" Isn't that fascinating? Who's really doing the deceiving here? Saul is the one who is being deceiving and manipulative and conniving in this relationship. But he says to her, "Why are you deceiving me like this?" He's not really lost his love for the Lord, but he's lost his love for his family. Being willing to manipulate his kids to get his own agenda accomplished. Michal told him, "He said to me, 'Let me get away. Why should I kill you?'"

When David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there.

Whoa. I just want to stop there because we have another triangle. David's in trouble. What's he going to do? I would suggest if you're in an unstable relationship, you're in a conflicting relationship, you want to get someone else into your life who you can come to that will give you advice and help you. You want to be someone who can give advice to other people and help them. But if you're in a conflicting, challenging relationship, you want to get help.

So David goes to Samuel. You know this, if you have a mentor in your life who you can go to who blesses you and helps you understand, because sometimes isn't it true that the problems that we're experiencing are partly our fault and your own selfishness. The mentor can kind of say, "You know what, I think you're right. He is a jerk, but you're being a little bit selfish here." So a mentor can guide us through that in some helpful ways. David goes to Samuel. Spiritual things are happening there. Worship services are taking place. That's what we're going to see here in the next passage.

In fact you might think this story ends there. We could have ended this story there because we've learned some significant things about the triangles and Saul's selfishness and so on. But there's an interesting part of the story I don't want to leave out here today, because it fits well into this. We tend to think of these selfish, manipulative, conniving people are so far away from God that they can never be touched by Him. But you have to understand that whatever you think God is doing, He's always doing more than that. Whatever you think God is doing, He's always doing more than that.

So let's look at the strange part of the story in verse 19. If you didn't think the first part was strange, look at this. Verse 19 – *Word came to Saul: "David is in Naioth at Ramah"; so he sent men to capture him. But when they saw a group of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing there as their leader, the Spirit of God came on Saul's men, and they also prophesied.* So now we have all these men coming to capture David and there's a worship service going on there. They're prophesying and worshipping the Lord, and Samuel is their worship leader in the midst of this. So these guys just fall in and they start worshipping too. It's bizarre.

Verse 21 – *Saul was told about it, and he sent more men, and they prophesied too. So the worship service is growing here. Saul sent men a third time, and they also prophesied. That is really amazing.*

But here's the most amazing. *Finally, he (Saul) himself left for Ramah and went to the great cistern at Seku. And he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" "Over in Naioth at Ramah," they said. So Saul went to Naioth at Ramah. But the Spirit of God came even on him, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth. He stripped off his garments, and he too prophesied in Samuel's presence. He lay naked all that day and all that night. This is why people say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"*

Now this is a great confidence for any of us to realize that God can even work in people that we think are far beyond His reach. God is in the business of reaching people. He works in people's lives and God can even touch someone who's totally selfish and moving away. God has given Saul so many choices in his life, and here's another opportunity. He experiences God in a powerful way. Wow.

It's also true that if you feel in your life that you've moved so far away from God that you are out of His reach, this is a great passage to illustrate you've never moved that far away. God wants to embrace you. He wants you to experience His grace. He wants you to experience the power that He has for your life. That is what God is doing here in Saul's life. Offering him another opportunity to make a major change in his life. It's just an amazing part of the story that's there. We're going to continue on in the story in the next couple of weeks, but just to learn about relationships and see what God is doing inside of David is very important.

Let's go back to this idea of triangles for a moment and just about relationship. There's a principle in God's word about relationships that has to do with being equally yoked.

When you're entering into a business partnership with someone, then you don't want to enter into that partnership typically with someone who's not a Christian. Why? Because that person doesn't share the same values that you do, so that when you get into conflict, which inevitably comes in a business relationship, it inevitably comes and there's conflict in that relationship. A Christian handles that better than a non-Christian handles it, supposedly. That's how it's supposed to be because Christians have a base. They understand what it means to be a Christian, so as a Christian they come into that dynamic with additional tools, resources, and so on. So the strongest relationship is one where you have Christ or God in the midst of all of that. He's someone that forms the foundation for those people.

But let's take an even more personal relationship. Let's take a marriage relationship. Marriages always experience conflict. Always. The greatest strength that a marriage can have is to have God as the triangle person in that relationship. That is what really makes a relationship strong. You've got a husband and wife who are arguing and upset with each other and God designed the relationship so that as we come before the Lord, He humbles us and He says, "You know what, I think you're being a little selfish there." Oh yeah, that's right. They ask for forgiveness and the

other person forgives. Because we share a common sense of the Spirit of God inside of us, the relationship is drawn together.

In fact I would suggest, married couples, that this is one of the purposes for sex. God has designed the marriage relationship so that when there's conflict you have to get rid of that conflict because you want to have sex. So God has designed that relationship in a way that we resolve it. God has designed the marriage relationship. It's a beautiful thing that He's done for us.

The strongest relationship that you can have is a relationship that relies on God as the triangled person in your life. You know what means? It means that you want to have a close relationship with the Lord. As your relationship with the Lord is strong, you want to find someone else who has that strong relationship. If you're going to build that relationship, you want to be praying together, you want to be going to church together. You want to be reading God's word or talking about the Lord or something together, serving the Lord together. In the midst of that, two people are growing closer to the Lord, growing closer to each other, and they have that common bond.

The triangled relationship I think is a very interesting way of looking at relationships in a powerful way. We can either come in as selfish people to manipulate, we can come in as peacemakers, or we can draw on others, godly people, or even God Himself, to bring stability into a relationship. Don't wait till your relationship with someone gets so convoluted and challenged before you get help. Relationships in conflict are looking for solutions and those solutions are sometimes you and me who come in and try to offer what God would want for those people in their own personal lives.

Just an amazing story as we get an inside look. I like that the Bible doesn't just share with us all kinds of situations that are pristine. We get to see behind the scenes of people who are selfish, who have problems. We learn from God's word in the midst of that how we can apply that to our own lives.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, I pray right now for those who may be here who don't know you personally. I pray that you would speak to them in their hearts and draw them to yourself and their needs are fitting into your plans. Lord, we ask for your grace in this midst of troubled relationships now. I know that we all have them close by or are in them. So I ask that you would bring wisdom and peace. Help us to be wise as serpents and gentle as doves as we face the difficult challenges that we find ourselves in every day. We thank you, Father, that we can come to you as our heavenly Father who loves us and cares for us. In that relationship we find peace. We find joy even in the midst of challenging situations. Lord, teach us how to receive that peace and then be peacemakers as well. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.