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# 1 SAMUEL 23:1-5

## 1 Samuel Series

[PRAYER] Lord, I ask that you would speak to us today. Not only through the silence, but through your word. As we look at the passage of scripture for today, we ask that you would speak and guide us and teach us. That the things that we need for living the life you want us to live this week would come from the next few minutes as we focus on who you are and what you're doing in our world. We turn our hearts to you. In Jesus' name, amen.

The study of the book of 1 Samuel is a fascinating one for me. I'm enjoying very much the study of the life of David. As we study David I like him because he's like me in the sense that he makes mistakes, he's a normal guy. David's a very emotional guy it seems in the way that he processed life. So I can really relate to that. He had ups and downs. He's just a young guy when he starts out.

So young people, I'm glad you're in here today. I want you to listen to this message because I'm convinced that in it there are some very important truths that you'll be able to apply to your life as you're trying to live your life. You've got a messy life, as all of us do, with challenges that we experience. God wants to do something in your heart. He wants to develop some things.

David had some real down times. He had some up times. He had a variety of all kinds of experiences in his life. In our last study in 1 Samuel we looked at chapters 21 and 22 and we saw that David under pressure made two significant mistakes. One mistake when he was under pressure he lied. There were significant consequences to his lie that he didn't recognize at first. The other mistake he made is that he went to get comfort in the enemy camp. If you remember that, he goes to the enemy camp to get comfort and then he knew that was a disaster because he almost got killed in that case. There are some times when we find ourselves going to the world's ideas for solutions and we miss what God wants to do in our lives.

So in our last study we left David at kind of the lowest place in his life. Maybe the same with Bathsheba also and the death of his son was a low place. But this was a very low place in his early life. Here's a man after God's own heart. Here's a man who's learning to be a man after God's own heart. But he leaves the two mistakes that he made and now he goes to the cave of Adullam.

In the cave of Adullam he reconnects with God. In the Take Jesus Home study we did this week, this idea was brought up. I really appreciated the thoughts that were mentioned in the group. Sometimes we're connected to God and everything is going great. But then we get disconnected and bad things happen. You know you start yelling at people or getting mad at people. You go,

“Oh I got to get connected back to the Lord.” So there’s this disconnect and connect that needs to take place.

Where we are right now in this story is this connecting place at the cave of Adullam with David and it’s some kind of a spiritual renewal that he’s experiencing because chapter 23 is different. We see a change in the way he’s interacting, what he’s doing. His whole demeanor seems to have changed.

We all need that kind of cave of Adullam experience where we reconnect with the Lord. I just want to encourage you to do that. Get connected to the Lord. Maybe that means being here at church and singing songs and worshipping. Sometimes it’s listening to the radio or reading your Bible on your own. But there’s this connection that takes place and we get reconnected to the Lord, then we can move forward without getting ourselves into trouble.

As we look at the first verse of 1 Samuel 23 we’re going to see now some things that happened to David. In chapter 23 we’re going to see David being faced with a number of challenges all at the same time. I can relate to that. If I have one bad thing happen I can usually take care of one bad thing. Maybe two bad things going on, I can solve them. But when I get multiple ones, that’s when I start getting in trouble in my own heart. I start wanting to take things under control and the stress level rises.

We see multiple things happening in chapter 23. So I want to take it in slow motion as we go through chapter 23 and take one group of verses at a time. We’re going to look at the first five verses today in 1 Samuel 23.

In order to bring us to those verses, I want to set the scene for you. Now David has moved from the cave of Adullam down to Hereth. It’s a forest area and it’s very protected. So he’s safe, in essence a little more safe than he would be otherwise from King Saul because the forest provides this safety for him.

Now he’s got all of these people coming to be part of his band. They’re joining with him. In fact the Bible tells us there are four hundred people who’ve joined him. So now his life is getting a little more complicated. Now he’s got to not only care of himself and watch out for King Saul over his shoulder, but now he’s watching out for four hundred men and their families. He’s got this big responsibility that he has to take care of them. Where is he going to get food to feed four hundred men and their families? That’s a lot of food. Are you going to kill deer in the forest? I don’t know where he’s going to get all the food, but the food is going to be important to care for these people. So he’s got a lot on his mind.

As he has a lot on his mind, we enter the first verse of 1 Samuel 23, which says this: *When David was told, “Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are looting the threshing floors,” he inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?”*

So here’s David. Just imagine this. You have to understand where he is in life before he gets the request to understand our application for our lives today. He’s a busy guy. He’s been running for his life. He was living in the palace and now he’s on the run. He had a friendship with Jonathan

that now he can't even see Jonathan. He had a promise of being the king and now where is that promise now? Because he's running from a maniac guy, Saul, who's trying to kill him when David didn't do anything wrong. And in the midst of all of his own pressures, the own things that are going on, he gets a request from someone else. Messengers come and the messengers say, "Help! Help! We're being attacked by the Philistines. They're coming to the threshing floors. They're stealing our grain."

Let me show you where Keilah is on the map. This is a map of Palestine area. Keilah is right there. We're talking here's the cave of Adullam here. The forest that he's in is down in here somewhere and he hears that there is this problem in Keilah. So he wants to go there to try to help them and figure out what's going on.

The problem was that there were threshing floors that were being attacked. This is an example of a threshing floor. The threshing floor was used when the grain came up and was grown and ready to be harvested. They would cut it off with a sharp knife. They would bring all of the heads over to the threshing floor, which was some kind of solid surface and a rock of some kind or bricks or something, and then the cows or the horses or the oxen would trample it down in order to crush it. The seeds would not be broken because the kernels of wheat seed are very strong. But it would separate them from the chaff.

The chaff was the waste product that was right there around the grain. So then they would winnow it by taking the grain and the chaff, and on a windy day they would throw it all up in the air. Of course the chaff was light, so it would blow away and the heavy grain would fall down back into the threshing floor. So here's some guys that are taking it in some containers and throwing it up and you can see all the grain on the ground that is heavy and falls down. This way they would capture the grain and get rid of the chaff.

It's an interesting picture because in Psalm 1 as it's being written it says that *the wicked person is like the chaff that the wind blows away*, but the righteous person is like this kernel and has this richness to it.

But when the wind comes it blows away. This is important because you had to put threshing floors in open places, on hills. They were very vulnerable places and so on a windy day you go out and do your winnowing in order to have the grain that you needed. Because they were vulnerable places, the Philistines would easily see what was going on and be able to take the grain. So that's what's happening. The grain represented their food, their work, their hope, kind of their sustenance of what was going on. The Philistines are taking that away from them.

So now David gets this message and the message that comes to David is this one that says, "Hey, we need some help. The Philistines are attacking. They're eluding the threshing floors. They're taking the grain after it's already been harvested. They're taking it away."

Now here's where I find that David is in this very interesting place for his heart. At this moment he's drawn to help them. There's this compassion that he feels to help someone who has a need. He sees the need that these people have and he has some ability, he has some history as a fighting guy. But he's got these problems. He's got four hundred guys who don't even know how

to fight yet. He's got an army. He's got to feed all these people. He has all these things going on, so he must be wrestling with two different things. Shall I go or shall I stay? So he's wrestling with this idea because he has this sense of compassion to go out and help these people.

So what does he do? He goes to the Lord and says, "*Shall I go and attack these Philistines?*" He asks the Lord about this. He inquires of the Lord because he wants to know what does God want me to do. I just think there's not a lot said in those words, but I think the words kind of go like this as he's coming before the Lord and saying, "Lord, you know my life, you know I've got all these things going on. You know that emotionally I'm just recovering. You know that spiritually I'm just recovering. You know that I'm trying to work with these people right around me. Lord, you know that Saul is trying to attack me. Lord, I got all these things going on. But then there's this opportunity over here. I feel for these people and I'd like to do something, but I don't know what to do."

Now that's the place where I think we find ourselves in sometimes in our own lives. We have all kinds of things going on in our own lives, yet we have opportunities to help other people. I think in the midst of those opportunities we come to a very important place in our lives and try to understand what does God want us to do in the midst of that.

I want to pause there for a moment and I want to share with you what I think God wants to do in our lives in the midst of compassion. I want to take you to this verse in Ezekiel 36:26 where it says – *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.*

Now here's the thing. When you become a Christian and you ask Jesus Christ to come into your life, He gives you this heart of flesh. But there is a tendency for the heart of flesh to become a heart of stone. So it just starts to happen. It's happening in your life now, it's happening in my life that starts to harden in our lives. So God has created for us different exercises that we can do for our heart to keep it soft. A flesh heart is a soft heart; a rigid heart is a heart of stone.

You'll know when you have a heart of stone because you'll start experiencing more anger than you normally do. Then anger is causing you to be more rigid and then you feel like you're victim of all other people and you want to blame problems on other people. So your heart is becoming hard in that area of anger. You'll know your heart is becoming hard when you start closing yourself off from people that you love and you're pulling yourself away. Your heart is becoming hard like a stone. You'll know you're becoming hard when the anxiety that you have is starting to take over and your heart is becoming hard. You'll know when your heart is becoming like this stone because this pride that you have is starting to close you off from recognizing what God wants to do and what God is doing in other people. So God has created these exercises, spiritual disciplines that we get involved in in our lives so that our hearts can remain soft.

So young people, you have to know this. When you exercise spiritually these things in your life, your heart can remain soft. God wants to do this work inside your heart. It's something like coming to church, for example. We could have all stayed home today and gotten a lot done. Some of us would have worked on our job, the work that we have. Others would have done some

cleaning around the house. Other people would have fixed the car or gone out shopping. We could have gotten a lot done today. But you didn't do that. You came here today.

Why did you come here today? Because you believe that giving up that time this morning in your schedule will free you up in a greater way for the rest of the week. You're exercising your heart. You know that coming here is strategic for your spiritual health. God is doing something to exercise your heart to keep it soft. That's the beauty of a spiritual discipline.

Another spiritual discipline that we have is giving. You can take your money and spend all your money on yourself or you can intentionally take some of that money and give it to the Lord. So the Bible talks about our giving. It should be intentional, not just random. We don't just give the leftovers or whatever I feel moved. There's an intentional systematic giving that we do regularly. When we do that, when we give like that, we're giving of our firstfruits, not the leftovers. All the giving that we do is we're making a statement. The statement we're making is I'm going to give up this money that I could spend on myself. I'm going to give it to the Lord's work.

In the midst of that, God does this special thing inside of our hearts. We become part of something much bigger than ourselves when we're giving to the Lord's work. We are giving away a little bit of our own selfishness and we're exercising that heart inside.

Now I would suggest another exercise or discipline that we engage is this compassion idea. This idea of being compassionate toward other people, seeing a need that someone else has and stepping out and participating in that need. When we do, that exercises the heart of ours and it helps us to think outside of ourselves. Otherwise we just get self-focused. "It's all about me. I need this. I've got all kinds of things I'm dealing with myself. I've got my own problems. I can't think of anybody else."

We as Christians have a different identity. As Christians we think differently than people who are not Christians. People who are not Christians are trying to gather and trying to put walls up around and they're trying to protect what they have. But Christians are different because even though we are stretched already, we are looking out for other people. We are looking for ways to initiate with other people. That's one of the things that keeps this heart of flesh working in our lives.

So David, struggling with this, says, "Lord should I go and fight?" This is another spiritual discipline, inquiring of the Lord. "Lord, what do you want me to do today with my time? How do you want me to manage this part of my life?" So he inquires of the Lord. We would do better to do more inquiring of the Lord because it makes the heart soft that He's given to us. So that it doesn't become more hard and we think, "We got it all together. We know what we're going to do." It makes it soft inside.

*The Lord answered him, "Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah." So he gets the answer that he needs. Fascinating what happens next. But David's men said to him, "Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!"*

You see, David is now at peace because now God has spoken to him and he knows what he needs to do. So he's ready to go out. He tells the men, "We're going to go out and attack the Philistines," but he gets resistance from his own men. I don't think these men are cowards. They're joining him as the forces. They're practical people. It isn't practical for us to go attack the Philistines. That's not our job. That's the king's job. You're not the king yet. Leave it to someone else to do the job. Our job is to get ourselves together. We're afraid already. *"In Judah we're afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces. We'll make ourselves vulnerable."*

Let me say some things about compassion. One – compassion is others-centered. It isn't centered on ourselves. It is others-centered. That's what makes it work as this exercise for our hearts. The second thing I want to say about compassion is that it makes us vulnerable. If you're all about self-protection, you're going to miss out on the best thing that God would have for you. It's all about others, not just about ourselves. So becoming vulnerable means that David is going to go out in an exposed area.

You know when you're compassionate with someone sometimes you get bit by the person you're trying to help. Right? Sometimes the compassion that you have for someone makes you vulnerable to other forces that are coming at you. Compassion is one of those things that makes us vulnerable and challenges come in the midst of that. That's what David is experiencing here. So he goes and his men say, "We can't do this. This isn't a good idea."

Now what is David going to do here? I think it's important for us when we get resistance from somebody. We've got an idea that I believe the Lord wants me to do this. We go and share that with somebody and we get resistance, I think the first question we have to ask is, "Did I hear the Lord right?" Really good question instead of saying, "The Lord said this to me and I'm going forward."

So here's what David does. *Once again David inquired of the Lord, and the Lord answered him, "Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand."* So he goes back and he comes to the Lord and he says, "I'm getting some resistance from the guys. I just want to make sure this is what you're telling me to do. Do you want me to go down and fight the battle here?" And He says, "Yes, I want you to go down and do it." So David goes and he goes with this compassion that he has and he goes out and helps these guys in Keilah.

Compassion is a really interesting thing. It's a powerful concept. It's not just a feeling. Empathy is the feeling. Empathy means I feel sad or sorry for someone or I can feel with them. We are to do that. The Bible says – *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.* So there is this sense of empathy that we experience when we see other people's emotions. But compassion is an action word because it's not just feeling about it; it's doing something about it. Compassion involves activity.

In the New Testament we have a word used. The word in the New Testament for compassion is the word *splagchna*. When somebody says, "You go to church. That's so shallow." You want to say, "No, we learn Greek at our church." So you want to be able to say that word. *Splagchna*. It

means from your gut you feel this sense of wanting to care for somebody. It's *splagchna*. That's the word.

The word is used in an interesting way about Jesus. In Matthew 20 He's going out of the city of Jericho and He's got a whole group of people. He's in a crowd and they're going up to Jerusalem. In that time people would often make pilgrimages to Jerusalem. They'd go for the feast days and so on. As they were going in groups on the road they would sing songs. They're called Songs of Ascent, and they kind of have a party while they're going. So they talk and good things would happen on the road. They're going up to Jerusalem because Jerusalem was 3,000 feet above sea level and going down to Jericho down to the Dead Sea, which is the lowest place on earth. So they're going all the way up now to Jerusalem. It's up. They're singing Songs of Ascent.

Jesus with His disciples and a bunch of other people, a crowd, are coming out of Jericho. They're enjoying their procession going up to Jerusalem. As they're doing that, there are two men on the side of the road that are calling out, "*Jesus, Son of David, have on mercy on us.*" And they keep yelling. There's a contrast made in the passage between the crowds and Jesus. The crowds, the Bible says, rebuked the men and said, "Be quiet. Don't rain on our parade. This isn't the time for you to be expressing your needs to everyone." The crowds rebuked them and told the guys to be quiet.

The Bible tells us that Jesus looked at them...in fact let me show you. *Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.* That's the words *splagchna*. He had compassion. He was different than the other people.

In fact Jesus Christ has called us to follow Him in that example. We are different than other people. God is described over and over again in the Old Testament that He's compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love. That's who our God is. He's compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love. The word compassion describes who God is.

There's another time the word *splagchna* is used in the New Testament in the story of the Good Samaritan. The Bible tells us that the Good Samaritan came and saw this man who was hurt on the side of the road who was overcome by robbers. The word compassion is used in there. It says – *But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion.* So this Samaritan takes this guy, puts him on his donkey, takes him to an inn, and cares for him. It's a man who had a need in his life. When he saw the need he went and did something about it.

We as Christians are different. We look at other people and we see the needs that they have and then we try to do something about them when we can.

I was fascinated just a few weeks ago. I was driving on I-95. We're driving fast on I-95 and all of a sudden all the traffic stops. So boom, people slamming on their brakes. I could see ahead that there had just been a collision about twenty cars in front of me. So you could see it just right above there. The steam is just starting to come out of the car and everything.

People are just going along the side. I drove my car into the median right up to the first car. I got out of my car, I ran to the door of the car, I opened it up, and the guy's head was just coming off the airbag. I was the first guy on the scene, nobody else around. His face comes off the airbag and I say, "Are you okay? Are you okay?" He says, "I think I'm just a little shook up. But I think I'm okay." I said, "Alright, well I'm going to go check on the other guy."

The other guy is like a hundred feet down the road. His car had flipped a couple of times and has landed down. All the wheels were smashed. So I run over there and he's already getting out of his car with blood on his face.

I said to him, "Hey, are you okay?"  
He says, "I don't know."  
I said, "Why don't you sit down right here."  
He says, "I can't sit down. Where's Dennis?"  
I said, "Dennis?"  
He said, "Dennis was with me in the car."

So I come back to the car, there is nobody in the car. So I cross the traffic that's moving really slowly. Meanwhile all the cars are going by. Nobody is stopping by me. This is the fascinating part for me. So I cut through the traffic and I'm looking on the median. Where is this guy? Is he over here on the center lane? I'm going to the other car. Did he fall to the ground? Did I miss him somewhere? I can't see him anywhere. So I came back and I'm helping him. All the police officers start to arrive, so I'm not needed anymore. So I get in my car and leave.

Now there was one other guy who came up during that time. But I'm telling you, there must have been a hundred cars who went by and only two of us stopped. Now I think there's a lot of good reasons to not stop in that kind of situation. I mean if you've got kids in the car or something then it's probably not the best time for you to be the Good Samaritan. But I'm surprised that a hundred people would go by and not care or do something about it. Maybe people cared, but they didn't do something about it.

Now I checked later on the news because I wanted to know – Did the guy die? What happened to him? Did he run away? Apparently in the news there's no one who died in that accident. So I think the guy was upset and in the midst of him being upset he was disoriented. I don't know who Dennis was and I probably never will know. But it doesn't look like a Dennis was on the scene at that point.

But the amazing thing for me was that people were not engaging and stopping to get out of their cars. There are a lot of things people could have done in that moment. There's trash strewn all over the road that people could be picking up. But I don't know why people don't do it.

But I do know this. Christians are different. I'm going to be that kind of person who is going to help other people. Is there a time in my schedule to care for other people, or am I so self-consumed with my ideas and good things that I'm doing that I don't have margin enough to help someone else who is in need. That's the compassion, the *splagchna* that we have as Christians because we follow Jesus.

It's not just with those people that we've never met, like the Good Samaritan kind of situation. It's also those people inside of our family. In fact the illustration of the prodigal son is a great example. In the example of the prodigal son, the young man went off and did his own thing. But where is the dad? The Bible tells us this about the boy. *But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him.* We need compassion in our own families.

I would just suggest that there are a lot of opportunities for us to stop and listen to someone or care for someone who's hurting in our own home. That doesn't mean just listening (although listening is a great way to do it), but looking for ways to care for them. That's the compassion, the *splagchna* that we need in our lives. It's that idea of compassion I think is brought back into this story of David as we see David making some very important decisions about his own life and what he's going to do.

So he wrestles with this. He comes to the Lord and he says, "Lord, I'm feeling this sense of compassion. Should I do this?" I think this is when David is man after God's own heart. Because he was the kind of guy that could exercise that flesh part of his heart, he could exercise the softness and keep his heart soft before the Lord by inquiring of the Lord, by exercising compassion in his life.

There's one more verse I want to look at. In this verse it says – *So David and his men went to Keilah, fought the Philistines and carried off their livestock. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah.* So he won the battle, no doubt. God was with him and he won the battle.

But don't miss the part in there about *and carried off their livestock*. I wonder if the soldiers as they went to fight realized that there was going to be some benefit to this. Or maybe this was a surprise benefit that they were going to take something they actually needed. They needed food out there in this forest for all these people. So they take the livestock and that's one of the benefits.

Now I don't want to suggest that every time you show compassion to someone you're going to get something. That's not our motivation, to give so that we're going to get something back. But it's really amazing in God's economy that things come back around to us and that God ends up doing something in our hearts when we're kind and considerate and compassionate to other people. It's the heart that God wants to work.

We are different as Christians. I believe that sometimes we lose that identity, so our heart starts to get hard. See, we are in a spiritual battle. That battle that we have that is spiritual is not just about the persecuted believers all around the world. There are many of them. That is a terrible problem that's going on. It's a spiritual battle that's happening in our world with persecuted believers being killed and so on. So in our culture good is being posted as evil, and evil being posted as good. That's a spiritual battle that's going on in our culture.

In addition to that, there's a spiritual battle going on in each one of our hearts, and that spiritual battle is one that when we get disconnected from God, our hearts start to become hard and brittle. Then we suffer and those people around us suffer.

So one of the keys, I think, of the Christian life is to have a soft heart. You have to understand the soft heart doesn't come by doing the kind things, by giving money or attending church or being compassionate. That's not how you get the soft heart. You get the soft heart from God through salvation when you ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart, come into your life and He gives you then that soft heart. But there's some disciplines that He's given to us so that we can keep that heart soft because He wants us to have a heart that's after Him.

I think we need to be reminded of that. I think we forget about our identity. I think that our hearts become hard because we forget who we are and we need to be reminded of that. Don't we? We need to be reminded that we are believers.

Young people, I just want you to hear that. You want to be exercising your spiritual heart regularly so that you don't develop a hard heart. We all know older people who become really bitter or they're really anxious or they have problems inside. God wants that heart to be soft. Work on it now in your life. Develop habits of working that heart so that you're praying regularly, you're coming to church, you're studying God's word. All of these things that we do you're being thankful, as we talked about in worship, it's another spiritual discipline. As we do those things it keeps the heart soft, and that's what God would have for us.

So would you stand with me and let's pray together that God would do a work inside our hearts to keep it soft. He allows us to be part of that work, so He gives us that responsibility and privilege to do our part in keeping that heart soft as well.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we do want to come before you right now and open our hearts so that you can do that surgery, point out the areas in our lives that need to be addressed. Help us to be like David, a man after your own heart. Give us a compassion to see the needs of others, to see them how you see them. Lord, we want to be people that can be used by you to care for others. So give us that opportunity to do it, we ask. Provide those opportunities this week and make us not so busy, not so self-focused that we can't help others that are in need. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.

Maybe you're listening to this and you're saying, "Boy, this is something I really need," and you'd like prayer this morning. There are prayer counselors up here. Come on up and get some prayer. Or maybe you know someone who really needs some prayer and you can pray for them. Have someone join with you in prayer.

If you've never accepted the Lord as your personal Savior, talk to me. Talk to me afterwards or come up while we're praying here and I'd gladly introduce you more to Jesus Christ and what He has to offer for you.

Listen to the words of this song. They tie right in with this sermon. You'll hear the words *heart* and *stone*, and all of these words that we talked about. We need to be reminded of our identity because that's who we are in Christ. Let's worship the Lord together.