



DAVID
GOD'S TRUE KING

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The Good Book Guide to David
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Why study God's true king?

The story of his battle with Goliath is the stuff of legends: an unknown, unlikely-looking youth defiantly takes on the ultimate enemy weapon—an enormous and unconquered super-warrior. He sets out unprotected and alone, yet astonishingly, he slaughters the evil giant—the enemy is routed and David wins total victory for his people.

David stands out in the Old Testament history of God's people, Israel. He is a magnetic and inspiring figure.

But then the stories and psalms reveal other “Davids”—the desperate outlaw and the broken sinner, as well as the magnificent king and “lover” of God. It's easy to see why the story of David and Goliath is still so popular. We love David the hero, the shepherd boy who became king of Israel, chosen by God as a man “after his own heart”. But what about David the despised “worm”, the hot-tempered bully, the weak father, the lustful playboy and the coldly calculating murderer? Did God really know what He was doing when He chose David?!

God doesn't speak to us in dry, abstract propositions—He loves to use vivid pictures, and David is a fantastic illustrated lesson for us. We warm to his character, his bold defiance of God's enemies, his humility and tender heart—humans have always wanted someone like this to look up to and be inspired by. But then he lets everyone down big time; his life becomes mired in selfish greed, callous cruelty and brazen lies. Even this “man after [God's] own heart” cannot help us because he cannot help himself.

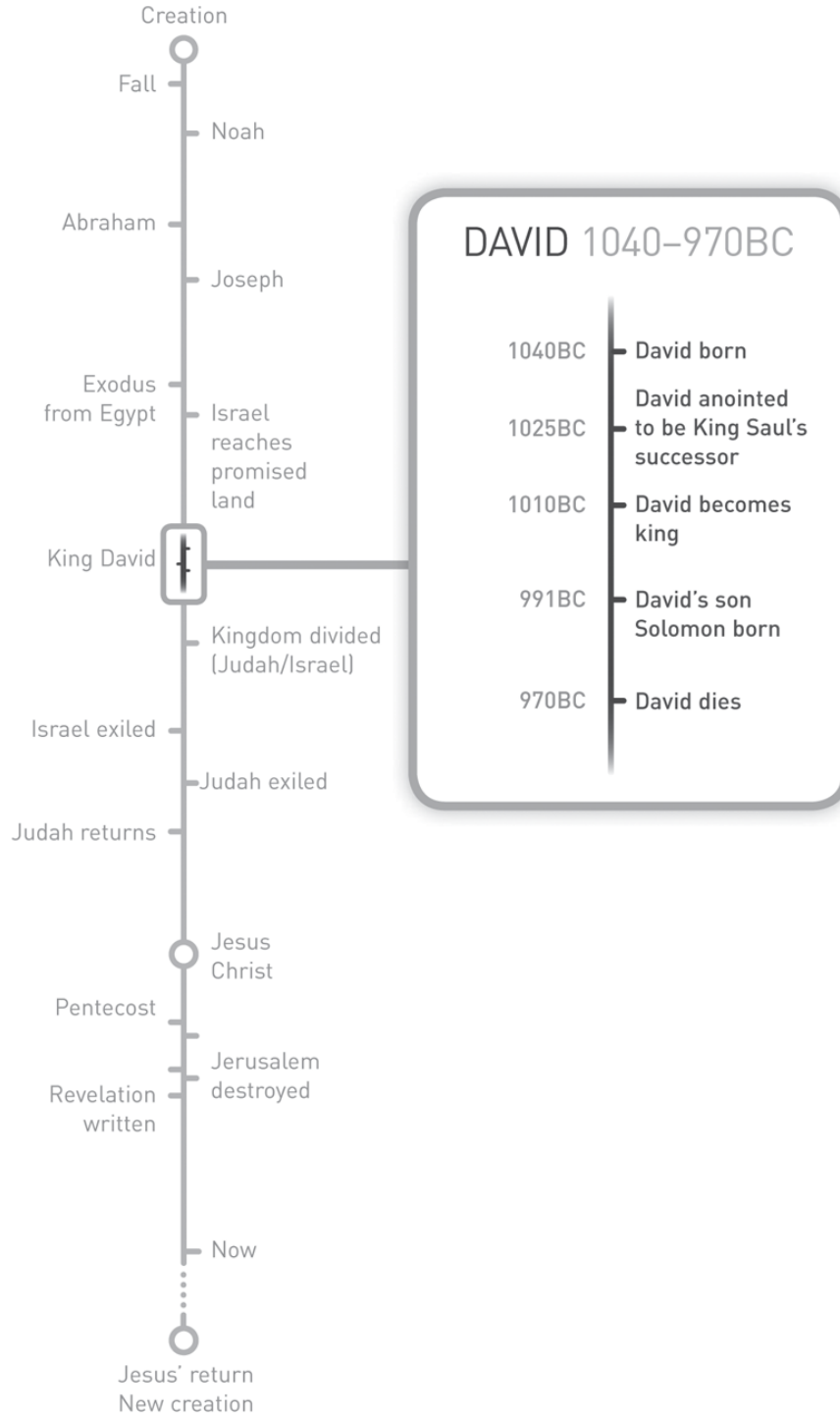
We need a greater hero.

So the story of David isn't just a lesson in the “secrets” of David's success or the reasons for his many failures. It uncovers the bigger story of that greater hero—Jesus—giving us glimpses of His complete victory over our greatest enemies, sin and death itself. Jesus' true kingship will never fail and His perfect salvation is what we all need.

In just six sessions, you will learn how this weak king, David, points to the ultimate king, Jesus—despised like the “worm” of David's psalm and killed, yet finally winning total victory for His people over sin and death.

BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the time of King David fit into the whole story of God's word?



LESSON 1: AN UNEXPECTED CHOICE

1 Samuel 16

⇒ *talk about*

1. Think about the way in which most people picture “success”. As a group, come up with a popular description of a “successful” person. By contrast, how do you think Christians would describe a successful person?

When God chose Samuel to be His prophet to the people of Israel, things were bad. There was a crisis of leadership in Israel, and no one to lead. Yet the books of Samuel teach us that God is the King and He rules His people. He will not leave them to fall into spiritual decay. 1 and 2 Samuel tell the story of Israel’s progress from chaos to order—from a land without any leadership to a land ruled by their greatest king, David.

But not only will we learn about God’s dealings with David and how David responded, we will also see how David received some amazing promises, which only found their fulfilment in “great David’s greater Son”—Jesus Christ. Despite his greatness, ultimately David was just a weak and sinful human; but he points us forward to the great King Jesus and helps us to see how God is our true King, controlling history and saving His people.

In this chapter, God chooses the king “after his own heart

⇒ *investigate*

⇒ **Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13: God’s choice of David**

DICTIONARY
Saul (v 1): the current king of Israel.
Heifer (v 2): cow.
Anoint (v 3): pour oil over, as a sign of being specially chosen by God for a particular task.

2. Why had God rejected Saul (v 1)? See 1 Samuel 13:7b–14 and 15:24–26.

3. Why was Samuel worried (v 2)? See also 1 Samuel 10:1.

4. Was there a need to be worried, do you think? Why/why not?

5. What do God's words (1 Samuel 16:1–3) show us about His plans (13 v14)?

6. What did Samuel do in response to God's words?

⇒ *apply*

7. In what situations will this truth—that God is in total control of His plans—be a comfort to us as Christians?

- What can Samuel's actions in v 4 teach us about trust and obedience?

- What will it mean for us to trust and obey God in the situations we have just discussed?

⇒ *getting personal*

Think of things in your life about which you worry. What difference would it make to trust that God is in total control of that situation? What might you need to do to show obedience to God in that situation, as Samuel did?

⇒ *investigate*

8. On what grounds did Samuel choose Eliab?

9. What did God say was wrong with Samuel's way of choosing the king?

10. **Read 1 Samuel 13:14.** Why did God choose David?

⇒ *explore more*

Read 1 Corinthians 1:20-31

Optional: What can we learn from these verses about the way in which God acts and the people He chooses?

How can we see this in:

- Jesus?
- the Christian message (the gospel)?
- Christians and the church?

⇒ *apply*

11. In what ways do we make the same error as Samuel; for example, in our attitudes to others or to the gospel?

- Why are Jesus and the message of the cross often rejected by people? Should this worry us? Why/why not?

⇒ *getting personal*

In what ways are you tempted to be ashamed of the gospel because of its apparent “weakness”? Plan and pray about ways you need to change.

⇒ *investigate*

Read 1 Samuel 16:14-23: God’s placing of David

12. How did David conduct himself during this time?

13. What does the tragic picture of Saul here teach us about God’s character?

⇒ *apply*

14. How does Saul stand as a warning for us today?

⇒ **pray**

Thank God that He uses the foolish things of this world to shame the wise. Thank Him that through the “folly” of the cross and the “weakness” of Christ He saves men and women like us!

Confess those times where you have not trusted that God is in total control of His plans, or where you have judged others by outward appearances rather than by looking at the heart.

Ask God to help you be like David—someone after His own heart—and not like Saul!

LESSON 2: AN IMPOSSIBLE VICTORY

1 Samuel 17

The story so far

God chose the shepherd-boy, David, to be king of Israel, because while man looks at the outward appearance, the Lord looks at the heart.

⇒ *talk about*

1. Share some frequently-heard views about what could be the greatest “enemy” that faces the human race today, and how this enemy can be defeated. Discuss how the Bible answers these questions differently.

⇒ *investigate*

We learned from the previous session that David is God’s chosen king. He is the unlikely choice and yet, God is the one who looks not on outward appearances, but at the heart. In this chapter God shows His choice to be right by defeating the enemies of Israel through His anointed king and upholding His name, even though David is just a young man. David succeeds where Israel fails and, while everyone else writes him off, assessing him by outward appearances, yet with the Lord he is victorious. In doing this David points forward to another from his family line who will defeat God’s enemies fully and finally on a cross, and will uphold God’s name and His glory.

⇒ **Read 1 Samuel 17**

It’s a long passage but a great read!

DICTIONARY
Exempt (v 25): make free from.
Uncircumcised (v 26): a way of saying “not part of God’s people”.

2. Having read through this familiar passage, what do you think is the main point of the story?
3. What is the heart of the problem that Israel faces in Goliath (v 8–11)?
4. How does the writer show the “weakness” of David (v 12–19)?

5. How is David despised and rejected throughout the story? Think about his conversations with:

- Eliab (v 28–29)
- Saul (v 32–39)
- Goliath (v 42–44)

How do each of these three look on “the outward appearance” of David? And how does David respond in each of the situations?

⇒ *explore more*

⇒ **Read Colossians 2:13-15**

Optional

Find the parallels between:

- *Israel’s predicament and that of sinful people everywhere.*
- *David’s experiences and actions in 1 Samuel 17 and those of Jesus.*
- *the outcome of David’s battle with Goliath and the outcome of Christ’s death on the cross.*

⇒ *apply*

6. In what ways do people today fall into the error of Eliab, Saul and Goliath, by regarding God’s true King, Jesus, as weak and irrelevant?

- How can Christians contribute to this wrong view of Jesus?

⇒ *getting personal*

What could your actions and words be saying about Jesus Christ to others?

In what ways do you need to change, so that those around you will understand more truly what God’s true King is like?

⇒ *investigate*

7. What is David's chief concern throughout the story (v 26, 36, 45)?
8. Why is it that David succeeds? (See also 1 Samuel 2 v 9b–10.) Why is he so confident (v 46–47)?
9. How do the Israelites respond to David's victory (v 52–53)?

⇒ *explore more*

In 1 Samuel 17 the Israelites benefited from the anointed king's victory over the enemy of God.

⇒ **Read Ephesians 1 v 3–11**

What benefits do we receive through the victory of God's anointed King, Jesus?

⇒ *apply*

10. **Read Ephesians 6 v 12.** What "Goliath" is the church called upon to fight?

- What can we learn from this story about how this "Goliath" will be overcome? Think about:
 - God's provision for Israel's need.
 - the way David acts in this situation.
 - the Israelites' response to David's victory.

See also 1 John 5 v 4b–5.

- How will confidence that Christ's church is on the winning side, despite our weak appearance, affect the way we live as Christians?

⇒ *getting personal*

In which areas of your life do you need to apply these lessons this week?

11. What would you now say is the main point of 1 Samuel 17?

⇒ *pray*

What has God's true King, Jesus, done for you? Spend time thanking God for these things.

Pray for people you know who regard Jesus Christ as weak and irrelevant, and not worthy of their trust.

Look again at the areas of your life mentioned in the last getting personal and ask God to help you change.

LESSON 3: AN AMAZING PROMISE

2 Samuel 7

The story so far

God chose the shepherd-boy, David, to be king of Israel, because while man looks at the outward appearance, the Lord looks at the heart. David, anointed by God but rejected by men, won a seemingly impossible victory over God's people's enemies—a picture of King Jesus' victory.

⇒ *talk about*

1. What sorts of promises do we commonly make? How good are we at keeping them? What promises can you think of that God has made? What evidence is there for the claim that God's promises never fail?

⇒ *investigate*

So far, we have seen how God has raised up His chosen king, David, to the throne of Israel. And through him, God has brought about victory over Israel's enemies. But in 2 Samuel 7 we discover that there is much more to come. Through David's family line, an even greater blessing will come to God's people. Sadly, the history of Israel in 1 and 2 Kings shows that no one in the Old Testament fulfils the high standards of this promise. Only one will fulfil the prophecy given to David in 2 Samuel 7; this is the one to whom the whole Old Testament looks forward—Jesus, “great David's greater Son”.

In 2 Samuel 7 we will look at God's promises and then David's response.

⇒ **Read 2 Samuel 7 v 1–17:** God's promises

DICTIONARY
Cedar (v 2, 7): a type of wood.
Offspring (v 12): children.
Endure (v 16): go on.

2. Describe the political and military situation that David faces at the beginning of 2 Samuel 7.
3. What is the unspoken meaning behind David's statement in verse 2?
4. How do the following verses prove Nathan's reply in verse 3 wrong? What does this teach us about human leaders?

5. What do we learn about God’s character in verses 5–7? What should we remember when we are keen to “do something for God”?

6. What does God promise to David personally (v 8–9, 11b)? 7. What does God promise about David’s descendant (v 12–16)? 8. What does God promise to His people (v 10)?

⇒ *explore more*

Look again at the promises made to David, particularly those about his descendant and God’s people. How would they be fulfilled?

optional

David’s descendant

What is the temple that would be built? (See 1 Kings 8 v 17–19 and John 2 v 19–21.)

Who would be the son (v 14) whose kingdom would last forever (v 13)? (See Mark 1 v 11 and Revelation 5 v 13.)

How and why would the son be punished (v 14)? (See 2 Corinthians 5 v 21 and Galatians 3 v 13.)

How and why would God’s everlasting love (v 15) be shown to the son? (See John 10 v 17 and Romans 1 v 4.)

God’s people

How would v 10–11a be fulfilled? (See Revelation 21 v 1–4 and 22–27.)

⇒ *apply*

9. Today Christians look forward to the promised return of Jesus Christ in power and glory. What confidence in God do the fulfilled promises of 2 Samuel 7 give us?

- What new things can we see about Jesus and His work for us, as we learn about God’s promises to David and the history of their fulfilment?

- How should confidence in Christ’s return affect the way we live now?

⇒ *getting personal*

How much do you look forward to Christ’s return? Or do you wonder if it will ever happen? How can you be helped, and help others, to have confidence in the promises of God not yet fulfilled?

⇒ *investigate*

⇒ **Read 2 Samuel 7:18-29:** David’s response

DICTIONARY

Redeemed (v 23): set free, by paying a price.
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10. What does David praise God for (v 18–24)?

11. What does David pray for (v 25–29)?

⇒ *apply*

12. Is our praise and adoration marked by similar things? If not, why not? If we prayed like David, what would have to change about the content of our prayers?

⇒ *getting personal*

Think of one change that you need to make in the way you pray, as a result of what you have learned in this session. Plan to make that change in the next week.

⇒ *pray*

Thank God for the fulfilment of His promises to David in Jesus. Why not spend time praying through them, as David did? Pray for people you know who do not trust God. Ask God to help

you have confidence as you wait for the promised return of Jesus Christ, and to live in the light of that glorious and certain event.

LESSON 4: AN ABJECT SINNER

2 Samuel 11-12

The story so far

God chose the shepherd-boy, David, to be king of Israel, because while man looks at the outward appearance, the Lord looks at the heart.

David, anointed by God but rejected by men, won a seemingly impossible victory over God's people's enemies—a picture of King Jesus' victory.

God promised David one of his descendants would rule for ever, as God's Son, and that His people would enjoy a perfect land—promises which come true in the life, death, resurrection and return of David's descendant, Jesus.

⇒ *talk about*

1. Have you ever been “knocked off balance” by the sinfulness of a fellow-Christian? Do you ever surprise yourself by how sinful you can be? Without letting out confidential information or mentioning details that can reveal identities, discuss why you were so unprepared for what happened.

⇒ *Investigate: David's sin*

Up to this point, David seems very impressive. He has had wonderful promises from God, he has brought the ark to Jerusalem, and, by the end of 2 Samuel 10, many of David's enemies have been conquered.

But this chapter shows how flawed David really was. It is a mistake to think that David was near perfect and that this episode is out of character. Certainly, he loved the Lord and was godly. And yet here we see the man as he really was—a weak sinner.

These chapters should not surprise us. They stand as lessons first, in the dire consequences of sin, and second, in the wonderful grace of God. It is all the more remarkable that God uses weak sinful humans to further His amazing plans and promises!

⇒ **Read 2 Samuel 11:1-27**

DICTIONARY

Ark (v 11): a rectangular box, covered in gold, with two angels on the lid. The space between the angels was where God's presence particularly dwelled. David had brought it into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6), but it sometimes went with Israel's army when they were fighting.

2. What is the train of events that led to David's sin? At what points could he have stopped?

⇒ *apply*

3. What do these verses teach us about temptation? Can we learn anything about resisting temptation?

⇒ *getting personal*

Think of one area of your life in which you are struggling to resist temptation at present. In what situations do you give in to that temptation? What can you do to avoid those situations or help yourself resist that temptation?

⇒ *investigate: the consequences*

4. How did David try and cover up his sin?

5. How does David's behavior compare to that of Uriah in this chapter?

6. By the end of the chapter all looks well. But what does the writer remind us of in verse 27? Why is this so significant?

⇒ **Read 2 Samuel 12:1-13a**

7. How does Nathan's story get David to see his sin? What does this reveal about sinful human hearts?

8. What does Nathan say the real problem is?

9. What is God's judgment on David's sin?

10. How does God show grace towards David in this passage?

11. What is David's reaction to God's word? (Compare David's response in verse 13 with that of Saul in 1 Samuel 13 v 11–15 and 15 v 19–26.)

⇒ *apply*

12. What do these verses teach us about God's judgment? What do they teach us about the importance of listening to the "word of the Lord"?

⇒ *getting personal*

In what areas are you tempted to "despise the word of the Lord"?

⇒ *investigate*: God's forgiveness

⇒ **Read 2 Samuel 12:13-25**

DICTIONARY
Gracious (v 22): undeservedly kind.

13. How can God forgive this sin? What should happen to David, according to Leviticus 20 v 10 and 24 v 17? Compare Romans 3 v 23–26.

14. What do the loss of David's illegitimate child, and the birth of Solomon, tell us about how God deals with sin?

⇒ *apply*

15. Looking back over the whole story, what have you learned about ...

- human hearts and sin's consequences?
- God's judgment?
- God's forgiveness?

⇒ *pray*

Think about what you have learned....

- What can you praise God for?
- What do you need to ask His forgiveness for?
- What do you need to ask His help for?

LESSON 5: AN UNDERSERVED FORGIVENESS

Psalm 51

The story so far

David—anointed by God as Israel’s king, but rejected by men—won a seemingly impossible victory over God’s people’s enemies—a picture of King Jesus’ victory.

God promised David one of his descendants would rule for ever, as God’s Son, and that His people would enjoy a perfect land—promises which come true in the life, death, resurrection and return of David’s descendant, Jesus.

King David committed adultery and murder, which God saw and judged. But sin can also be forgiven by God.

⇒ *talkabout*

1. How often do we hear the word “forgiveness” in our society? What words are more likely to be used when someone has been wronged?

⇒ *Investigate*

As the heading to this psalm suggests, it was written in the aftermath of 2 Samuel 11–12. Last session we saw how David was plunged into the depths of sin as an adulterer, liar, murderer and cheat. But the word of God came to him in the form of Nathan the prophet and so his restoration began. If the story in 2 Samuel 11–12 tells us the details of the sin, then this psalm teaches us what was going on in David’s heart. And yet, it also speaks to each one of us who wrestles with sin, and shows us the wonderful depths of God’s love in forgiving the sinner. We also learn what is involved for our part—heart-felt repentance.

⇒ *Read Psalm 51 v 1–5: Confession*

DICTIONARY
Transgressions (v 1, 3): acts which break a law.
Iniquity (v 2): immoral behaviour.
Justified (v 4): here, it means “right and fair”.

2. On what grounds does David appeal to God for forgiveness (v 1–2)?
3. What has David discovered about himself (v 3–5)?

4. How do you think he has come to this discovery (see 2 Samuel 12, especially verses 9a and 11a)?

⇒ *apply*

5. Why is it important that we understand God’s character as revealed in His word?

- How will this help us in the Christian life?
- What happens when we have a poor understanding of our own sin?

⇒ *getting personal*

Do you see yourself as David saw himself? If not, why not? What can you do to gain a better understanding of God’s character and your sin?

⇒ *investigate*

⇒ **Read Psalm 51:6-8: Confidence**

DICTIONARY
Hyssop (v 7): a plant. When in slavery in Egypt, Israel used hyssop branches to paint a lamb’s blood on their doorposts, showing they were trusting in God’s rescue plan (Exodus 12 v 21–23).

6. How is David’s confidence seen in these verses?

⇒ *explore more*

Do you think the Christian’s confidence should be greater or lesser than David’s? Why do you think that? See Colossians 1 v 25–26.

optional

Our Bible translations mask the fact that the verbs in Ps 51 v 6b–8 are future tense—“you will teach me” ... “you will cleanse me”. David was looking forward to these things. But the New Testament uses present or past tenses to speak about the same experience for Christians.

How have Christians been “taught wisdom” by God? See 1 John 2 v 20–27 (especially v 20 and 27).

What is that wisdom? See Colossians 2 v 3 and 2 Timothy 3 v 15.

How have Christians been “cleansed” and “washed” by God? See John 15 v 3; Ephesians 5 v 25–26 and Titus 3 v 4–5.

So what do people need to become acceptable (clean) to God and to be truly wise? What does this mean for Christian outreach and evangelism?

⇒ **Read Psalm 51:9-13: Renewal**

7. What are the various longings that David expresses in these verses?
 - v 9
 - v 10
 - v 11
 - v 12

8. Looking at verse 13, what is David’s aim now he has been forgiven?

⇒ **Read Psalm 51 v 14–19: Response**

DICTIONARY
Bloodguilt (v 14): guilty of shedding blood. Burnt offerings (v 16): a description of sacrifices offered to God. Contrite (v 17): honestly sorry. Zion (v 18): Jerusalem.

9. What other longings and intentions make up David’s response to God in these verses?
 - v 14–15
 - v 16–17
 - v 18–19

10. What is it that God requires of us in verses 16–17?

⇒ *apply*

11. How will we act, as individual Christians and as churches, if we share these longings that David has spoken about in Psalm 51?

- How does David's attitude in verse 13 challenge us?

⇒ *getting personal*

How much do you share David's longings and responses to God? Are there any that are missing from your life? What will you do about that?

⇒ *pray*

What have you learned from this psalm about God's dealings with us? Give Him praise and thanks for those things.

Pray for those you know who don't understand God's character and their own sinfulness and so have no understanding of God's amazing grace.

Ask God to help you remember the encouragements and act on the challenges of this psalm.

LESSON 6: AN AWESOME GOD

2 Samuel 22

The story so far

God promised David one of his descendants would rule for ever, as God's Son, and that His people would enjoy a perfect land—promises which come true in the life, death, resurrection and return of David's descendant, Jesus.

King David committed adultery and murder, which God saw and judged. But God's people can confess their sins and know that they are forgiven by Him, just as David did.

⇒ *talkabout*

1. Share some commonly-held views about what God is like. Where do these views come from? If you, as a Christian, had the opportunity to talk to someone with one of these views about what God is like, what points would you try to get across?

⇒ **investigate: David's God**

This final session brings us to the end of the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, but to the heart of David. In 2 Samuel 22 David is looking back over certain events in his life (see v 1), and remembering how God has watched over him. David shows his deep understanding of the God he serves, and, with the benefit of hindsight, he can now see that God's hand has been at work, which causes him to praise.

But more than that, David's hindsight of the past helps him to live with foresight in the present. David's only concern is to glorify God, who has kept him and rescued him on countless occasions. As Christians, we can appreciate much of what David says as we also know it to be true through Jesus. The challenge to us is whether the God we claim to know is the same as David's, or whether our view of God is rather shallow in comparison. David truly knew God!

⇒ **Read 2 Samuel 22 v 1–20**

DICTIONARY
Horn (v 3): a symbol of strength.
Snares (v 6): traps.
Cherubim (v 11): angels.

2. In verses 2–4, how many different images does David use to describe God? How does each image help us to understand God better?

3. What was David's first port of call in his time of distress?

4. What do verses 8–20 show us about David's understanding of God? Are there any hints from these verses as to where David's understanding of God came from? (Compare Exodus 19 v 18.)

5. In verses 17–20, David records three ways in which God has saved him. What are they?

⇒ *apply*

6. What things can prevent us from praying as David did (v 7) when we are in difficulty?
 - How will praying help us in these situations?

 - How would an understanding of God, like David's, help us to live as Christians?

 - How can we help ourselves to develop this kind of understanding and experience of God?

⇒ *getting personal*

What has been your first reaction in times of trouble? Like David's, in verse 7? If not, why not? How big is your God?

⇒ *investigate*: David's righteousness

⇒ **Read** 2 Samuel 22:21–31

DICTIONARY
Haughty (v 28): proud, thinking you're better than those around you.
Troop (v 30): squad of soldiers.

7. What do these verses tell us about David's desires and heart?

⇒ *explore more*

optional

What is David not saying in these verses? (Compare Psalm 51. See also Romans 3 v 10–12.)

So what is he saying? (See Proverbs 3 v 5–6 and Matthew 5 v 1–12).

How have verses 21–25 been fulfilled literally? (See 1 Peter 2 v 22.)

How can these verses be true of Christians? (See 2 Corinthians 5 v 21.)

⇒ *investigate*: David's hope

⇒ **Read 2 Samuel 22 v 31–51**

DICTIONARY

Exalted (v 47, 49): lifted up.

8. How is David able to win victory over his enemies?

9. How are David's victories over his enemies described? What impression does this give?

⇒ *explore more*

optional

How are these verses fulfilled in Jesus? Think about:

- *His victory* (v 32–43): see Hebrews 2 v 14–15; Colossians 2 v 13–15.
- *His rule over the nations* (v 44–46): see Matthew 25 v 31–46; Revelation 19 v 11–16.
- *His final exaltation* (v 47–51): see Philippians 2 v 9–11.

⇒ *apply*

10. What qualities have you seen in the life of David, which, as a Christian, you would like to imitate in your own life?

- From looking at the life of God's king, David, what have you learned about God's true King, Jesus? And how will that affect your life?

⇒ *getting personal*

Can you see, as David did, how God has worked in the past—both in history and in your own experience? Do you have confidence, like David, of God's wonderful future for you? How could grateful hindsight and confident foresight affect the way you live now?

⇒ *pray*

Praise God for what He has done in the past, for how He has made you righteous, and for what He is going to do in the future.

Ask God to help you put into practice particular lessons that you have learned from the life of David.

Take some words from 2 Samuel 22 which have particularly struck you; turn them into your own heartfelt prayer to God.

