

Respect
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Allen Power

1 Samuel 26:7-12,21-25

Consider this statement: *“You should always take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself.”* Why would most people argue that IS GOOD ADVICE in our American, free market system?

On the surface that statement would seem to make perfect sense in a world where we hear sayings like, *“Control your destiny or somebody else will! Look out for number one! Take what’s yours!”* That statement doesn’t say lie, cheat, or steal. It just says, *“Take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself.”* What argument would you give AGAINST that statement?

Today’s lesson will show us that David, the future king of Israel, understood that it’s not always BEST to take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself. Or, as my wife is fond of saying: *“Just because you CAN do something, doesn’t mean you SHOULD.”*

3 Big Ideas: 1. Opportunity doesn’t always indicate God’s will for our lives. 2. God can accomplish His plans for my life without an extra “push” from me. 3. If a situation requires manipulation from me, it’s probably NOT God’s plan for my life.

- As we’ve learned, God had anointed David to be the future king of Israel but He had not yet removed Saul the current king. Saul was threatened by this rising star David and was hunting him down to kill him.
- David and his band of warriors were living in caves to avoid Saul.
- A group called the Ziphites tipped Saul off as to David’s whereabouts.
- David’s army was only about 600 men. But, Saul had such fear of David’s craftiness that he took an army of 3,000 to find him and kill him.
- David’s spies discovered that Saul and his army were on the hunt and were camped for the night. David decided to go and

personally check it out. He asked for a volunteer and a soldier named Abishai stepped up.

1 Samuel 26:7–12 (ESV)

⁷ So David and Abishai went to the army by night. And there lay Saul sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the army lay around him. ⁸ Then Abishai said to David, “God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice.” ⁹ But David said to Abishai, “Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless?” ¹⁰ And David said, “As the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. ¹¹ The Lord forbid that I should put out my hand against the Lord’s anointed. But take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go.” ¹² So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul’s head, and they went away. No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them.

- Saul and his men weren’t just tired. David and Abishai were able to creep in so easily because God knocked Saul and his army out cold.
- Though he had the perfect opportunity, David didn’t kill Saul but he took his spear and his water jug.
- **Why do you think David would have taken those two items?**
- Not only did taking these items prove David was right next to Saul as he slept, we can read some symbolism into the spear and the jug. A king’s spear was a symbol of his royal rule. In the wilderness, water meant survival. The water jug symbolized David having Saul’s life in his hands.
- Though David didn’t kill Saul, he wasn’t done with Saul and his men.
- He climbed on a high peak where it would be hard for them to grab him and he yelled to Saul and his army. He obviously didn’t want to humiliate Saul directly, because he started taunting Saul’s bodyguard Abner.
- *“Abner, you’re not much of a bodyguard to the king! You’re sleeping on the job Abner! I was standing right next to you both*

and I could have killed Saul. Want proof? Where are the king's spear and the jug of water that were beside his head? I'll tell you where! Right here in my hands!"

- Saul knew David could have killed him, but didn't. When Saul realized David had again spared his life he got all choked up.

1 Samuel 26:21–25 (ESV)

²¹ Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake."

²² And David answered and said, "Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and take it. ²³ The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the Lord gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against the Lord's anointed. ²⁴ Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the Lord, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation." ²⁵ Then Saul said to David, "Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them." So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.

- This was not the first time David had the opportunity to kill Saul. In chapter 24 we read that while David and his men were hiding in a cave, King Saul came in to "relieve himself." David was so close he could have stabbed Saul and killed him. David couldn't bring himself to do it. Instead he cut off a corner of Saul's robe.
- 24:5 tells us: *"But then David's conscience began bothering him because he had cut Saul's robe. ⁶ He said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this to my lord the king. I shouldn't attack the Lord's anointed one, for the Lord himself has chosen him."⁷ So David restrained his men and did not let them kill Saul."*
- David ran after Saul and announced what he had done. He told Saul, *"See this piece of your robe! I could have killed you. But I won't because you're God's anointed king."* David probably hoped this would cause Saul to stop his vendetta against him. David's actions did make an impression on Saul.
- Saul said: *"You are a better man than I am, for you have repaid me good for evil...²⁰ And now I realize that you are surely going to be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will flourish under your rule. ²¹ Now swear to me by the Lord that when that*

happens you will not kill my family and destroy my line of descendants!”² David agreed and they parted.

- But, Saul wasn't sorry for long. Soon he was once again hunting David.
- Now, again David had the opportunity to easily kill Saul but he didn't.
- So, what can you and I learn from this story? Let's see how it applies.
- God placed Saul at David's feet a second time -- asleep no less.
- **How could David have justified taking advantage of this situation?**
- It would have been easy for anyone to assume that since God kept giving David opportunities to kill Saul it must have been God's will.
- Look at verse eight. **What did David's man Abishai suggest? How could that suggestion have helped David rationalize the situation?**
- Abishai's suggestion could have given David a "technicality" to be able to say Saul's blood wasn't on his hands. Still David refused.
- **If it wasn't God's will for David to kill Saul, why did God put Saul and his army to sleep so David and Abishai could sneak in?**
- Verses 10 & 11: **What reason did David give for not killing Saul?**
- David understood what we need to learn from this text: Opportunity doesn't always indicate God's will for our lives. God can accomplish His plans without an extra "push" from me. And if a situation requires manipulation from me, it's probably NOT God's best plan for my life.
- Did you ever try to manipulate circumstances to make them appear to be God's will for your life? I mean you want something so bad you just KNOW God would want it for you too!
- So we get clever as we ask God for His perfect will for our life.
- *"Lord, you know how much I want a new job so I'm trusting you. If someone calls and offers me a job tomorrow between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. I'm going to assume that's your will for my future."*

- *“Lord, you know how much we would enjoy a new car. So, even though we don’t tithe and we have some debt already, if (when I’m scouring the car ads) I find a royal blue Mercedes for sale I’ll assume that buying it is your will for my life.”*
- How many bad marriages started with a prayer like: *“Lord, you know how much I want to be married so I’m trusting you to send me the right person. I’ll assume the next person you send to ask me out is Mr. Right!”*
- You get the point, and those are ridiculous examples. But they’re not too far from the truth.
- What about a situation like David’s when an opportunity shows up that seems to make total sense? **How can you determine if it’s God’s will?**
- Let’s look at several ways to discern whether an opportunity is from God.
- **What was David’s reason for passing on the opportunity to kill Saul?**
- Lesson: When it comes to big, moral issues we need to decide what’s right BEFORE we’re tempted. David had decided what was/was not right.
- David’s very life was at stake, but His respect for God and God’s king wouldn’t allow him to kill Saul.
- **Why wouldn’t David justify taking action as “kill or be killed?”**
- David wrote several Psalms while running from Saul. One is Psalm 18.
- In Psalm 18:17 (ESV) David wrote: *He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.*
- David knew God had anointed him to be king. He couldn’t fulfill that destiny unless he was alive, so he knew God would protect him from Saul.
- David also knew God would decide whether Saul should live or die. In verse 10 David said of Saul, *“...the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish.”* In other words, if God wants Saul dead he can take him out!
- Lesson: God doesn’t need my help to accomplish His will for my life. God has a plan for my life and He doesn’t need a “push” from me.

- Here's a good rule of thumb: If something requires manipulation from me, it's probably not God's will. If something is God's will for your life He will present it as a gift; you won't have to pry it out of His hands.
- Another reason to be careful about opportunities that appear to make sense: Satan sometimes deploys decoys. What appears to be an opportunity from God might be a trap from Satan. It might be bait with a hook in it!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- We need to understand some things that David understood:
 - o Opportunity doesn't always indicate God's will for our lives.
 - o God can accomplish His plans without an extra "push" from me.
 - o If a situation requires manipulation from me, it's probably NOT God's best plan for my life.
 - o God's plan is always better than our plan.
 - o God's timing is always the right timing.
- The main lesson from this text is what David gave to Saul as his real reason for not killing him:

1 Samuel 26:23–24 (ESV)

²³ The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the Lord gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against the Lord's anointed. ²⁴ Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the Lord, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation."

- God's perfect will for our lives will never violate God's word. If a decision isn't righteous and faithful to God, it's NOT His will for us.

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Sa 24:5–7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

² Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Sa 24:17–21). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.