

## Prayers

### Opening prayer

Speak to me, Lord Jesus, in the quiet moments of this day, and minister to my needy soul. Whisper in my ear to remind me to turn to You and choose Your better way: Say a word that encourages me to exercise the gifts and graces You have given me: Shout a word of warning when I wander from the pathway of Your righteousness. Stay close, Lord Jesus, so I may hear the things You say to me, and learn to trust Your ever present wisdom in all I do and say. Thank You, Lord Jesus Christ: AMEN

### Prayer Suggestions

General theme of the week: CULTURE

**1. For yourself**

*What is your more pressing concern at the moment? Resolve to pray about this from as many different perspectives as possible*

**2. For your friends and family**

*Pray especially for those members of your friends and family who face difficult cultural issues, such as different forms of prejudice or misunderstanding*

**3. For the church and its work**

*Pray that God's people might rejoice to take the Gospel to people who reject Christianity. Pray that God will change the hearts of those who oppose His Word*

**4. For your neighbourhood, your country and the world (News)**

*Pray for journalists who have to work throughout the world in cultures very different to their own. Pray that the news we receive might be a fair reflection of the truth as it is seen by those who are affected by it, and a genuine attempt to report the facts*

### Meditation

Love is more than just an emotion; God is love.

Be careful, sometimes love says 'stop';  
So don't retain the torments of the enemy,  
Turn from all the sin that tempts your soul,  
And let the Spirit lead you on to higher things.

Be patient, when in wisdom, love says, 'wait',  
Give the Spirit space to do His work unseen;  
Submit to Christ, and let His glorious plan unfold,  
And love will guide you where you need to go.

Be ready for the time when love says 'go',  
Grasp the moment, seize the open vision,  
Use the overflowing power of God's Spirit,  
Let love's latent fruitfulness be found in You!

Love is more than can be ever known, for God is love.

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## Bible Study

### Bible passage – 1 Samuel 19:8-17

<sup>8</sup> War broke out once more, and David went out and fought the Philistines; he struck them with such force that they fled before him.

<sup>9</sup> But an evil spirit from the LORD came upon Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand. While David was playing the harp, <sup>10</sup> Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear, but David eluded him; Saul drove the spear into the wall, and David made good his escape that night.

<sup>11</sup> 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 dead!'

<sup>12</sup> So Michal let David down through a window, and he fled and escaped. <sup>13</sup> Then, Michal took an idol and laid it on the bed, covering it with a garment and putting some goats' hair at the head.

<sup>14</sup> When Saul sent the men to capture David, Michal said,

'He is ill.'

<sup>15</sup> 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.'

<sup>16</sup> But when the men entered, there was the idol in the bed, and at the head was some goats' hair!

<sup>17</sup> Saul said to Michal,

'Why did you deceive me like this and send my enemy away so that he escaped?'

Michal told him,

'He said to me, "Let me get away. Why should I kill you?"'

## Review

***David escapes from Saul, with the help of his wife, but we are left wondering what is going to happen now both to David, the man anointed to lead Israel, and to Israel, a nation left in the clutches of a paranoid old man.***

This is a strange passage from the story of David. It paints a picture of the unstable relationship between Saul and David (19:8-10) and describes David's famous escape from Saul (19:11f.), with a considerable amount of help from his wife (19:13,17). When we read a passage like this today, we tend to read it as if it is simply the next part of David's story, but the writers had more in mind, and we must watch out for what this might be.

We begin with a verse that reinforces the picture of David as a hero and defender of Israel, loyally doing the King's business by keeping the war-like Philistines at bay (19:8). Despite the killing of Goliath, Israel faced a constant threat from her enemies, and it was David who dealt with this. By contrast, Saul remained at court consumed with jealousy; his paranoia being fed by the insecurity of being the one responsible for Israel's security but not the one who was fighting her battles. Of course, we who read this story know that David is the only one who can effectively lead Israel.

The next two verses, 9 and 10, describe a peculiar incident in which '*an evil spirit from the Lord*' consumes Saul, and he attempts to kill David while he is playing the harp. It is a repeat performance of his earlier rage (18:10), and completely contrary to the promise he has just made to Jonathan to refrain from killing David. The irony is clear enough; the failed king of Israel tries to kill the future king and subvert God's will. Yet David, who by his anointing could claim Saul's throne for his own, refuses to retaliate against the old King. Like so many of God's great servants, he had to wait for God's timing before he could do the great works for which he had been chosen.

Back at his house, David was confronted by his wife, Michal, and she told him, bluntly, that he would have to flee from Saul's court, immediately. Their home seems to have been built into the walls of whatever town hosted Saul's court, so Michal let David down '*through a window*' (19:12), from where he could make good his escape. Now this story appears to have similarities with the story of Rahab the prostitute, in the book of Joshua (chapter 2). Back then, Israelite spies were sent into Jericho before the famous battle, but they were hunted by the King of Jericho and sought refuge. They were hidden by Rahab, who helped them escape through a window in her home within the wall of the city; but before they left, she confessed her trust in the God of Israel and obtained a guarantee that if the city was sacked she would be spared (Joshua 2:11-14).

Of course, the most obvious link between the two stories is the nature of the escape, but there may be more. David's escape occurred at a time when the stories of Joshua and the Judges were the 'folk-lore' of Israel, so the writer of 1 Samuel was undoubtedly using this ancient story to say something more about both David and Michal. Just like Joshua's spies, David would prove to be 'in the right', and just like the days of Joshua, God was leading Israel through his chosen servant, even though events 'on the ground' did not look promising. In addition, Michal is like Rahab, a woman who placed her trust in God and did what was right in the heat of the moment.

One interesting feature of the story is Michal's deception of Saul's servants while they were trying to find David (19:13f.). We are told that she made an 'idol', covered it with animal hair and placed it in a bed! When challenged, her story was that David was sick, but the lie was quickly exposed by Saul (19:17) who demanded David's head, sick or not (19:15)! Saul felt betrayed by his daughter and was incensed (19:17), because she had helped her husband and ignored the interests of her father. Indeed, Michal was lying to his face when she implied that David had threatened to kill her (19:17), when the truth was that she had planned David's escape!

There are numerous interesting parts of the story yet to be explored; for example, what does the writer mean by an '*evil spirit from the Lord*' (19:9), and what was Michal doing with an 'idol' (19:13)? We must remember that the Old Testament presents God as in total charge of all things including all 'spirits', and idols as like toys devoid of spiritual meaning.

But the focus of this passage is on David. After this incident, he is on the run, without a wife and with no prospects of fulfilling the promise of his anointing or even bearing a son and heir. God's purposes are in abeyance, and we must wait to see what happens. However, as we will soon discover, the chapters of 1 Samuel describing David's early life are but the beginning of one of the longest sagas in the Bible, and the whole story of David's life will run through the rest of 1 Samuel, the whole of 2 Samuel, and the first chapter of 1 Kings! There is so much more to come!

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## Discipleship

### Questions for groups

1. Have you had to do something to 'save your life'? Share your story, and explain something of your feelings. See if they connect in any way with this passage of Scripture.
2. What idols are on display or locked away in the cupboards of Christians today? Try not to answer this question by pointing the finger at anyone but yourselves.
3. What place does Michal have in this story, and how does God use her, and why?

### Discipleship challenges

- *Spend some time thinking through what you believe to be God's long term plan for your life. You may know this already, in which case pray about whether you are indeed fulfilling this plan. Make sure you know the vision and seek ways of making sure you keep it in mind.*
- *You may have to withdraw from something in order to have eventual victory under God's guidance. Is there something in your life from which you should withdraw?*

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## Final Prayer

Almighty God; I give You my all in the journey of my life, so take the little I have to offer and use me. Change me into the person that You would have me be, and give me hope as I catch sight of Your glory. Thank You and praise You, Almighty God. AMEN

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