

Life Lesson 70
David in Ziklag
Text: I Samuel 30

The Introduction

Do you ever think, “When I grow up, I’m going to serve the Lord?” Or maybe you think, “I can’t really serve God because I’m just a kid and there is nothing big I can do now.” Sometimes kids think only preachers and missionaries are servants of God. But God has a job for you now, and a reward for doing that job. In our story today we will hear about some people who got a reward, even though they had to stay behind.

The Story

David and his men were hiding out in the land of the Philistines – and the Philistine princes weren’t happy.

“What are they doing here?” the princes asked King Achish. “Isn’t that David, the Hebrew, who fought us in so many battles? Aren’t all those men with him Hebrews, too? Why are they going with us to fight against their countrymen?”

“David has been faithful to me these last several years,” Achish answered. “All the time he has been living in our land I haven’t had one complaint against him.”

The princes were furious.

“Make him stay here while we fight the Israelites,” they insisted. “We know just what will happen. We’ll get into the thick of battle and they will turn against us and fight with their own country.”

“I guess you’ll have to stay here,” Achish told David. “I trust you, but the princes don’t.”

David couldn’t have been too sorry to hear that decision, and he surely wasn’t surprised about it. He certainly wouldn’t fight against his own people, the very people God had called him to serve. Yet, had he refused, Achish would have been angry. David trusted God to work out this difficult situation, and He did.

When David and his men returned to their city of Ziklag, they had a horrible surprise waiting for them. Their city had been burned and their families were gone! The men were so overcome with grief that they sat down and cried until they could cry no more.

“This wouldn’t have happened if David hadn’t insisted we go with the Philistines. We weren’t going to fight anyway, so we should have stayed home. If we hadn’t been gone, our homes wouldn’t have been attacked,” the men said.

“Yes,” someone else added. ‘It’s David’s fault our children and our wives were carried away captive. He should have to pay for it.’”

“Let’s stone him!” someone else shouted.

David was distressed when he heard what his men were saying about him. But the Bible says he “encouraged himself in the Lord.” He asked the Lord what he should do. The Lord directed him to follow after the troops who had done this wicked thing.

David and his six hundred men started off after those cruel people. They came to a flooded stream. Some of the men were too weak to cross the stream after their long trip with Achish and the horrible shock they received when they returned home.

‘You men stay here with the supplies,’ David told them. “We still have four hundred men who are able to fight.”

As David and his men were following the trail left by the attacking army, they came across an Egyptian man lying in a field. They gave him food and water and soon he was revived enough to talk to them.

“Who are you and where did you come from?” David asked.

“I am a slave to an Amalekite. My master left me here because I got sick and couldn’t keep up with the troops. We made an invasion into the land of Israel and we also burned Ziklag.”

‘Can you show us where your master’s army is camped?’ David asked.

“Yes, if you promise not to kill me or give me back to my master,” the Egyptian answered.

He led David and his men to the spot where the Amalekites were having a big party to celebrate their victory. David and his men attacked and fought from evening that day to evening of the next day. They won and almost all of the Amalekites were killed. David and his men were able to recover all the wives and children which had been stolen and all of the goods as well.

Everyone was happy, but soon there were some who began to complain.

“It’s not fair,” they grumbled. “We shouldn’t have to share the spoils we got in the battle with those men who were too weak to go with us. We did the fighting. We should get to keep all the rewards.”

When David heard that he made them stop in a hurry.

“It was God who gave us that victory,” he told the grumblers. “The men who guarded the supplies had an important job, too. They will receive the same reward as those who went to fight the battle.”

That was a wise decision. It became a rule for the Israelite people from that day.

The Life Lesson

Do you know that God has a similar law for us? God calls some people into the foreign mission field. God calls others to be pastors or full-time Christian workers. He has a reward for those who serve them.

What about the people the Lord doesn’t call to a specific mission field? Do they not receive a reward? Yes, they receive a reward, too. If you are in the place God wants you to be, He has a job for you. That job is just as important as the one in a foreign land. Maybe you will be one of the people who give money so that the missionaries can stay and work in the field. Maybe you will be one who will be called to pray for the missionaries faithfully. Wherever you are, you are to tell others about the Lord Jesus. If you obey God, you will receive the same reward as those who leave home and travel far away to preach the gospel.

Review Questions

Why did King Achish refuse to take David along to fight the Israelites?

Because the princes were afraid David would turn on them in battle.

What did David and his men find when they returned to Ziklag?

The Amalakites had attacked and carried away the women and children.

What did David's men do?

They mourned -- and they were ready to kill David.

What did David do when he saw that his family was gone and that his men were ready to kill him?

He "encouraged himself in the Lord."

Who told David where the Amalakites had gone?

They found a slave who had been left for dead. The slave told David all he needed to know in order to find the enemy.

Why did some of the people stay behind to watch the baggage?

They were too tired and weak to go on and fight.

Who won the battle?

David and his men took back their families and everything the Amalakites had stolen. They took extra besides.

What did the men who fought say about sharing the goods with the people left with the baggage?

They didn't want to share.

What did David decree?

Whoever stays behind and protects the baggage should get equal reward with the soldiers.

Will you get a reward if you are serving God where you are?

Yes, the people who support and pray for missionaries will get a reward, too.