

## David & the Biblical Pro-Life Ethic

Three instances from David's life illustrate his commitment to the sanctity of human life (the biblical pro-life ethic) – two positively, one negatively. As you see in the sidebar, many other episodes demonstrate how thoroughly the principle was ingrained. (*Suggested answers to discussion questions are indicated in italic.*)

### DAVID UPHELD THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

1. **Read 2 Samuel 23:13-17.** (Although recorded toward the end of David's life, this incident may have taken place around the time of the events in 1 Sam. 22.) Philistines had invaded David's hometown. How did David feel? *He was filled with longing for a taste of Bethlehem's water.*

What did David's men do for him? *The risked their lives to satisfy his longing.*

What was David's immediate reaction? *He poured out the water as an offering to God, without tasting a drop.*

To what did David liken the water? *He likened the water to their blood and to an offering for God.*

Imagine yourself as one of David's three mighty men. How would you have felt, seeing him pour the water on the ground? Would you have felt honored by David's action? Why or why not?

**Key questions:** What might the men have learned about David's values from this experience? What was more important to David, his pleasure or his men? *By pouring out the water, he showed that the lives of his men were more precious to him than his own life. He showed that, even though he was their king, their lives were equal to him in value.*

Whom did he value more, his men or God? *By pouring out the water to God, David showed he put himself lower than God.*

Do you think this incident would cause the men to behave differently in the future? In what ways? *Perhaps they would have a greater respect for life and resist foolishly risking it.*

2. **Read 1 Samuel 30:11-15.** Discuss how this little-known episode further illustrates David's commitment to the sanctity of human life.

Describe the person that was found by David's men. *Young man. Egyptian. Hungry. Thirsty. Servant (slave) of an Amalekite. Sick. Abandoned. Left for dead.*

What does this episode say about the Amalekites' regard for the sanctity of human life? *They had no compassion for people of another culture, for the young, the sick, the hungry, the dying. They cared more about their military objectives.*

The Egyptian was an enemy combatant. How might David's men have treated him? *They could have killed him, taken him prisoner, tortured or abused him.*

How did David treat the Egyptian? Note similarities between his behavior and that of the Good Samaritan in Jesus' parable (Luke 10:30-37). *Both David and the Good Samaritan took care of the physical needs of a natural enemy – food, drink, medicine, rest – and saw to it that he was restored to full strength.*

What did this treatment cause the young man to do? *He switched sides and helped David and his men gain a military advantage.*

**Note:** When did they care for him – before or after they knew he would/could help them? *Before.*

**Key questions:** What in God's law would have informed David about how he should behave? What about God's character would have informed him?

- *He would have known from the 6th commandment that he should not murder.*
- *He would have known from the creation account that mankind was made in God's image, and that it includes all men, not just Israel.*
- *He would have known from Genesis 9:5 that God is watching and keeps track of every human life. As leader, David would answer for this man's mistreatment or death.*

We also see language from Genesis 9:5 in the episode with the three mighty men. In likening the water to their blood, we get the idea that David knew he would answer to God if their lives were lost in the satisfaction of his desires.

#### **Related episodes in David's life:**

- David refused to kill Saul (1 Samuel 24 and 26)
- David honored the lives of his enemies (2 Sam. 1:13-16, 3:26-30, 4:2-12)
- David cared for a disabled man (2 Sam. 9:1-13)
- David restrained himself from taking vengeance on people who treated him poorly (1 Sam. 25, 2 Sam. 16:5-13 and 19:18-23)
- The shedding of "much blood" kept David from building God's temple (1 Chronicles 22:7-9, 28:2-6)

#### **David's commitment to the biblical pro-life ethic contrasted sharply with Saul's neglect:**

- Saul did not care for the physical well-being of his fighters (1 Sam. 14:24-26)
- Saul killed all the insignificant people of Amalek but kept alive its king and the choicest animals (1 Sam. 15:7-9)
- Saul was jealous of David's kill-count (1 Sam. 18:7-9)
- Jonathan had to persuade Saul that killing David would be "without cause" and a "sin against innocent blood" (1 Sam. 19:4-6)
- Saul sentenced an entire village to death – priests, women, and children – for the "crime" of defending David against a false accusation (1 Sam. 22:14-19)

*Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.*

*—Genesis 9:5 (NKJV)*

What other considerations might have led David to conclude it would be wrong to kill the young Egyptian? In what ways was he innocent? As a slave/servant of Amalek, he may have had no choice about fighting Israel. As an injured or sick person, he was vulnerable and unable to defend himself.

## DAVID FAILED TO UPHOLD THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

- 3. If needed, review 2 Samuel 11.** This third incident, involving David and Bathsheba and her husband Uriah, is well known. Consider the following:

Uriah was one of David's mighty men (2 Sam. 23:39, 1 Chronicles 11:41). Compare how David treated him to how he treated the three mighty men in 2 Sam. 23. *He didn't care at all for Uriah's life, nor for the men under him. He arranged for Uriah's death.*

How did sexual sin play into David's disregard for the sanctity of human life? *Sexual sin is at the heart of this murder plot. David hoped to hide his sin, and then he wanted to assume Uriah's place as Bathsheba's husband.*

Note how strong drink was used in this instance (vs. 13). *David attempted to use strong drink to weaken Uriah's resolve, much like the way predators use drugs and alcohol in sexual assaults.*

Comparing this episode with the first (2 Sam. 23:13-17), how did David change in regard to self-indulgence? *Depending on the order in which these episodes took place, in chapter 11 we see that he indulged himself with Bathsheba at the expense of a loyal soldier, and in chapter 23 he refused to indulge himself at the expense of three loyal soldiers.*

Look at 1 John 3:12 and discuss similarities between Cain and David. *David began to hate his "brother" warrior because Uriah was more behaving more righteously than he was. David's deeds were evil. Uriah (who had done nothing but get in the way of David's lust) was noble and loyal, while David behaved dishonorably and disloyally.*

Who else did David involve in his wicked deed? *David misused his servant Joab – who was already guilty of violating the sanctity of human life (2 Sam. 3) – for his own purposes. In this way he perverted kingly authority, much like Saul did when he ordered his men to murder the priests of Nob (1 Sam. 22:14-19).*

What does it say about David that he was placated by the news of Uriah's death, heartened by his army's loss, and unmoved by the loss of a brave warrior? *Everything about this episode in David's life is topsy-turvy. A guilty conscience hindered him from thinking straight. His mind and heart were twisted by lust.*

In 1 Sam. 13:14, David had been called "a man after God's own heart." What do the final words of 2 Sam. 11 say about his relationship to God after he married Bathsheba? *David was completely out of step with God (v. 27). God was greatly displeased because David had arranged everything for his own pleasure, without God's design for life and marriage in mind.*

**Key questions:** Considering how far this good man fell from God's earlier high estimation, what lessons are there for us? *Sexual sin is closely related to disregard for the sanctity of human life. Obedience to God requires constant vigilance. We must guard our minds and hearts from temptation. When we're pursuing our own pleasure we're in danger of displeasing God.*

**Consider the rest of the story:** God's law required adulterers and murderers to be put to death (see Exodus 21:12 & 23, Leviticus 20:10). David survived this terrible episode without losing his life because he thoroughly repented (see 2 Sam. 12:1-14 and Psalm 51). Years after his death, David became the standard by which other kings were judged (1 Kings 11:4-6). Nevertheless, as 1 Kings 15:5 indicates, the ungodly way he treated Bathsheba and Uriah forever stains our remembrance of David.

*David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.*

*-1Kings 15:5 (NKJV)*

**Application:** How well is the biblical pro-life ethic ingrained in your own heart and mind? How might you strengthen your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors in relation to the sanctity of human life?

ADDITIONAL STUDY: David's expression of the pro-life ethic in his writings		
Psalm 9:12 Psalm 10:3-14 Psalm 11:5 Psalm 26:9	Psalm 37:12-15, 32 Psalm 54:3 Psalm 55:9, 21 & 23 Psalm 56:5	Psalm 59:3 Psalm 62:3-4 Psalm 86:14-17 Psalm 139:13-18