

“HEART AFTER GOD”

(David)

For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

By Sally Ulrey

Key verses: 1 Sam 13:14, David was a “man after God’s own heart”

Objective: To turn to and praise God through all the ups and downs of life, like David did

The Set up: Minimal

The Plan:

- **Hook:** Speed Friending (10-15 mins)
 - Use a game to have them tell stories about some ups and downs of their lives
- **Book:** “After God’s own Heart” (15 mins)
 - Using a timeline of David’s life, and some selected stories from the Bible, look at all the ups and downs of David’s life and his response of turning to God no matter what
- **Look:** Ups and Downs (5 mins)
 - Personal timeline of their own ups and downs in life.
- **Took:** Write a Psalm (5-10 mins)
 - Following David’s example, youth will write a personal psalm/prayer, affirming faith in God through all the ups and downs of life
 - As an additional activity, as time permits, they can write another one in groups to a pre-existing tune (like a worship song) and then share

The Supplies:

- Copy of lesson
- Whiteboard/Flip Chart & something to write with
- Paper or copies of blank “Ups & Downs of Life” graph for each student
- Pens

Speed Friending (Hook, 10-15 mins)

In this section, we'll use a game to get them to talk about some of their ups and downs. How we respond to the ups and downs of life is the main idea of this lesson, that we should respond like David, and turn to God, praising God in all situations. So first, we'll get them talking about some good and bad circumstances they've faced.

INSTRUCTIONS: The way you play the game is like Speed Dating (but we're not doing it for dating purposes, just getting to know each other better as friends, hence the name...) You put everyone in two lines, so that everyone has a partner. This can just be standing facing each other or across a table. The people in one line (let's say it's the left line or left side of the table) stay put at the end of each "round." The people in the other line (right line) move down one person after each "round," and the person at the end (who can't move down anymore) moves to the other end of the line. You ask a question, and have the partners answer it to each other, then move down. With the new partners, you have them answer a new question.

- Explain how the game works (partners, one question answered per partner, which side moves, etc.)
- Ask a question, and at the end of about a minute, tell them to switch (everyone moves down a space in one of the lines)
- Continue asking questions until you've asked about 10 questions, switching about every minute. This may or may not mean that everyone has had everyone else for a partner, but that's ok. Just as long as you've gone through a majority of the questions.
- As the moderator, you can also share a short story as an example for some of them to give them ideas

Speed Friending Questions (switch partners after each question; give about 1 min per question)

- Tell your friend about a childhood injury
- Tell your friend about a time when people liked a joke you made or thought something you said was profound
- Tell your friend about an embarrassing childhood moment
- Tell your friend one of your favorite memories
- Tell your friend about a day recently when it felt like every single thing was going wrong
- Tell your friend about a really, really good day, when everything felt like it was going right
- Tell your friend about a time when you tried for something, and you didn't get it
- Tell your friend about a time when you tried for something, and you DID get it
- Tell your friend about something you really were hoping for, but you had to wait a really long time before getting it
- Tell your friend about a time where you felt close to God

Transition (say something like): You just shared some of the ups and downs and high points and low points of your own life, and now we're going to look at ups and downs of someone else's life from the Bible...David. This guy had some MAJOR ups and some MAJOR downs, so we're going to look at his story. The Bible says David is a man "after God's own heart..." We're going to look at his life and find out why it says that about him.

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“After God’s Own Heart” (Book, 15 mins)

In this section, we are going to look at the life of David. We’ll go over a timeline of his life, the ups and downs, the triumphs and challenges he faced, and through it all, we’ll look at how he responded to God in those times.

- Using the Flip Chart/Whiteboard, draw out the graph below of David’s life, and go over some of the things that happened to him
 - You don’t have to write out all the bullet points, just go over them quickly to give the general feel of things in that period of David’s life
 - The graph of “Awesomeness of Life’s Circumstances” is obviously subjective, but don’t get bogged down in things like whether he was better or worse off in the hills or dealing with rebellions...the point is, he had ups and downs, and he turned to God through all of them.
- Pass out the Scriptures that record David’s responses to each situation, and have volunteers read them.
- After each statement is read, have them try to guess when he said it, then let them know when it was (the answers are on the graph; don’t reveal them until they guess)

Mini Lecture:

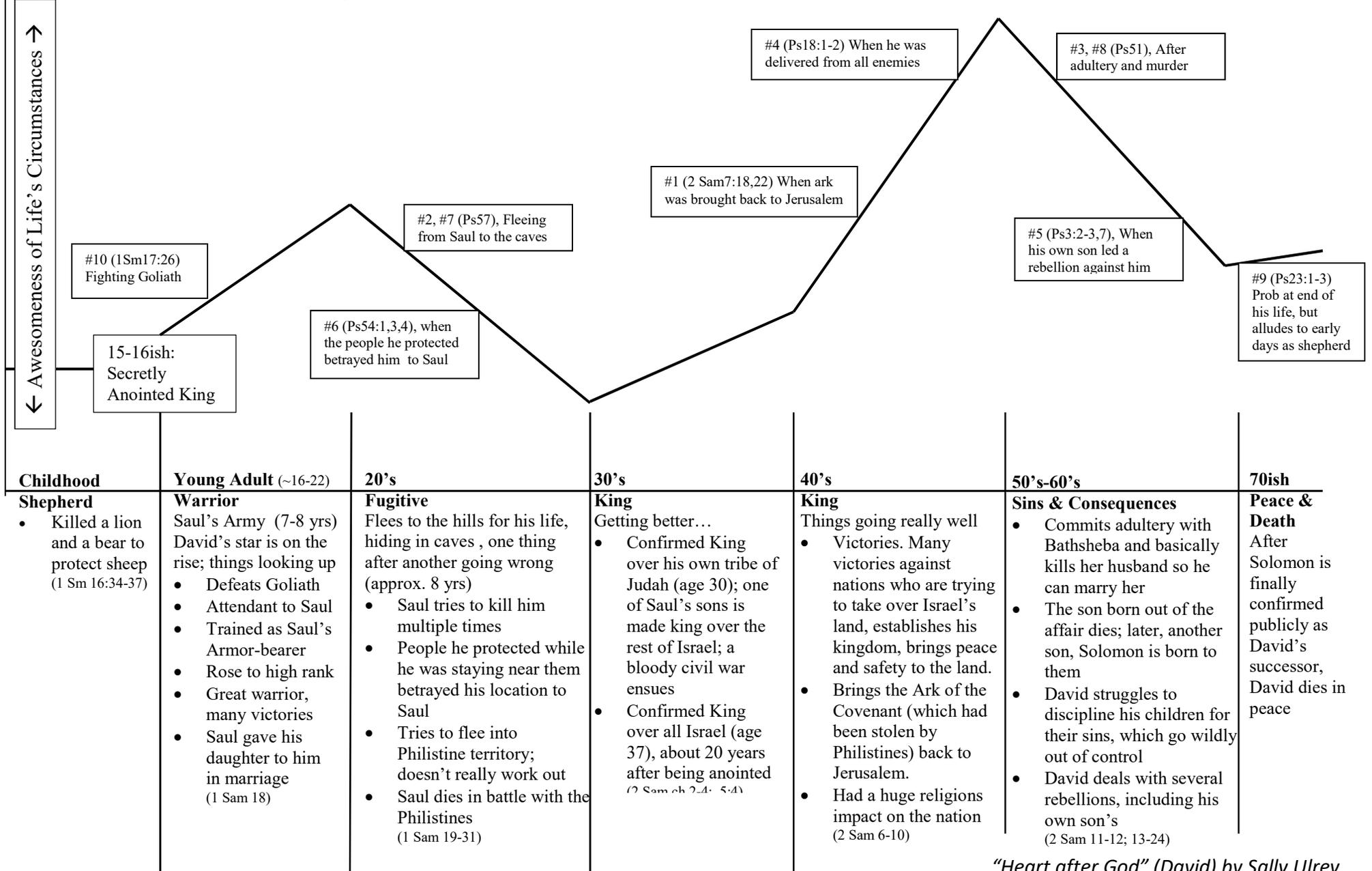
When you say David is “a man after God’s own heart,” it can mean that he’s like God, like how you would say a person “takes after” his/her parents. It could also mean that he pursues God, as in, he is going AFTER God. Both were true in David’s case. He is like God because he is pursuing God. He is “after God’s own heart”. The main way we see that David is like God and is pursuing God is through the fact that no matter what happens to him, good, bad, things he deserves, things he doesn’t...he ALWAYS turns toward God. His response to every circumstance is to turn to God in praise and worship and faith and trust.

- When things are looking up, he praises God. He doesn’t forget about God in the good times.
- When he’s facing hard circumstances beyond his control, he praises God. He turns to God, not away...even when he’s sad or angry.
- When he sins, he doesn’t let guilt and shame keep him away from God. He turns back for healing.

Transition: So how do we respond in the circumstances we face? The good? The bad? When we sin? When we deal with the consequences of sin? How do we respond?

Ups and Downs of David's Life

(Chart for Teacher Reference for the Book)



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Scriptures

(Pass out to Youth to read. Try to figure out when in his life David might have said them)

#1—“Who am I, O Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?...How great you are, O Sovereign Lord! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you!”

#2—“Your great love reaches to the heavens. Your faithfulness stretches to the sky”

#3—“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence”

#4—“I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; God is my rock in whom I take refuge”

#5—“Many are saying of me, ‘God will not deliver him.’ But you are a shield around me, O Lord...Arise, O Lord! Deliver me, O my God!”

#6—“Vindicate me by your might. Strangers are attacking me, ruthless men seek my life...Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me”

#7—“My heart is steadfast, O god, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music. Awake, my soul! Awake harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn!”

#8—“You teach me wisdom...You will make me hear of joy and gladness again...Open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise”

#9—“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul”

#10—“Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?”

Ups and Downs (Look, 5 mins)

In this part, youth think about their own ups and downs of life, and how they respond to God through them. They'll create a graph (like David's) of their own triumphs and challenges. This will lead into the "Took," when they'll write their own response to God.

As time permits, this may be an opportunity for you as the teacher to share an overview of your own faith story of how God has been faithful to you throughout your life, and how it has taught you to turn to God through it all.

Graphs

- Pass out pens, paper (you can use a blank sheet or make copies of the blank graph for each person)
- Explain to youth that they will now create their own graph of their life's circumstances...their ups and downs.
- The horizontal line is their age
- The vertical line is how awesome their circumstances are
- They can write or draw things that remind them of why things were up or down
- Instruct the to think about how they responded to God through those circumstances

Transition: We will all face ups and downs throughout our lives. Much of those circumstances we won't be able to control, but the one thing we can do is always turn to God through it all, and let God draw us closer through all those things. On the backs of your papers, take a few minutes to write your own Psalm to God, your own response to God. You can be really honest; express fear, anger, sadness, joy, everything. But try to include a statement about how you want to turn to God and be near God.

Write a Psalm (Took, 5-10 mins)

This is their opportunity to personally respond to God. Give them time to write their own Psalms, encouraging them to be honest, but encouraging them to include some statement of trust in God or wanting to turn toward God.

- Give them a few minutes to write their own personal psalm
- After they are done, if you have time, put them into groups and have them rewrite the words of a worship song they know, about a situation they have faced as teenagers
- Allow sharing as time permits on a voluntary basis

Optional activity if there's extra time:

- Write another psalm in a small group, using a pre-existing tune (like a worship song) they know, and then have the group share their psalm.

Close in prayer, using the personal psalm you wrote or one of theirs (with permission), or even one of David's.

Ups and Downs of Life

← Awesomeness of Life's Circumstances →

Age →

Describe Circumstances & Response:

"Heart aft