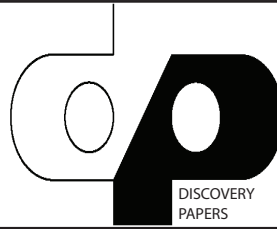


# CAN YOU TRUST YOUR HEART?

SERIES: A LIFE OF PASSION:  
THE STORY OF DAVID.



Catalog No. 20151115  
1 Samuel 25:1–44  
15th Message  
Scott Grant  
November 15, 2015

1 Samuel 26:1–25

Mary Paleologos, who calls herself a “transformational coach,” says this:

*Your heart speaks the truth. It's as simple and sacred as this. No one knows your heart better than you do. Your heart speaks to you every day in the language of love. It speaks to you with kindness and hope. It never speaks of fear and doubt, and it will never betray you. Your heart honors you, and when you listen to the guidance of your heart, your peace and happiness is restored. Your heart holds the key to your life. Your dreams, wishes and desires are all imbedded in your heart. Whom your heart chooses to love, your life's work and your purpose all reside in your heart. [Mary Paleologos, “Trust Your Heart ([www.huffingtonpost.com/mary-paleologos/trust-your-heart\\_b\\_5140576.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mary-paleologos/trust-your-heart_b_5140576.html))].]*

There is much to be said for trusting your heart, especially for those of us who never trust our hearts because we're always conforming to whatever is expected of us—or whatever we think is expected of us. But is there everything to be said for trusting your heart? “Your heart speaks the truth.” Is that true? Always? In 1 Samuel 27, David trusts his heart. Where does his heart take him?

David, in a daring night mission, tried to persuade Saul, his pursuer, to bury the hatchet (1 Samuel 26). Although Saul spoke words of contrition, David is not convinced.

## Crossing over

1 Samuel 27:1-4:

**Then David said in his heart, “Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within the borders of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand.” 2 So David arose and went over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. 3 And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his**

**men, every man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow. 4 And when it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, he no longer sought him.**

When David, seeking refuge from Saul, first visited Gath of the Philistines, the servants of Achish suspected that he was the one who had struck down his “ten thousands.” David literally “took these words in his heart” and became “very much afraid of Achish.” He then pretended to be insane and escaped (1 Samuel 21:10-14). Now once again, the narrator speaks of David's heart, only this time the words originate in David's heart: “Then David said in his heart . . .” In 1 Samuel 21, the words that penetrated David's heart provoked fear and led to his departure from Gath. This time, the words that originate in David's heart provoke his return to Gath.

What does David say in his heart? “Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul.” Is that true? In 1 Samuel 16:13, the prophet Samuel anointed David as king of Israel, as Saul's successor. Samuel also anticipated Saul's demise and even his death in 1 Samuel 13:14, 15:23, and 28:19. Do the words in David's heart overrule the words in the prophet's mouth?

In 1 Samuel 26:10, David spoke these words concerning Saul's destiny: “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.” Earlier, David was confident that Saul would “perish.” A short time later, David believes that he will “perish” by the hand of Saul.

As readers, all we have to do is read a few chapters ahead to discover that David was right in 1 Samuel 26 and wrong in 1 Samuel 27. David would not perish by Saul's hand. On the contrary, Saul would perish by his own hand.

What else does David say in his heart? “There is nothing better for me than that I should escape to the land of the Philistines.” Is that true? The Philistines are enemies of Israel. If David goes over to the Philistines, he jeopardizes his political future. Earlier, after David had escaped to the Philistines, he escaped from the

Philistines only by acting insane. Inasmuch as David was wrong with the first sentence that emerged from his heart, and given his ill-fated first visit to the Philistines, we might conjecture that David is wrong with the second sentence that emerges from his heart. Perhaps there is something better for David than escaping to the Philistines—something like embracing the Lord as his refuge (Psalm 142:5).

The Israelites of old crossed over into the land of promise. David, on the other hand, crosses over from the land of promise to the land of the pagans. Why? Because he's afraid of Saul. David pulled out all stops in 1 Samuel 26 to persuade Saul to bury the hatchet, and although Saul responded in apparent repentance, David knows Saul well enough by now not to trust in words alone.

David is tired of life on the run. He's tired of always looking over his shoulder. He wants relief. He has six hundred men with him, plus his family and other families. He wants to settle down somewhere where Saul won't pursue him. Indeed, the words translated "lived" in verse 3 can also be translated "dwelled" or "settled down." It is the key word in 1 Samuel 27, appearing six times. David hopes that if he goes outside the borders of Israel, Saul will give up the chase.

Why go to Achish, king of Gath, again? David was able to fool Achish the last time he was in Gath. Perhaps he hopes to exploit Achish's gullibility. After all, it's easier to manipulate a stupid man (Achish) than a crazy man (Saul). David's plan works. Achish takes him in, and Saul calls off the dogs.

Can David trust the words he speaks in his heart? We know that the words of the first sentence are wrong. The narrative leads us to question the words of the second sentence also, even though David's plan works. David's heart may not be the most trustworthy recipient or originator of words.

## Settling down

### 1 Samuel 27:5-6:

**Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be given me in one of the country towns, that I may dwell there. For why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?" 6 So that day Achish gave him Ziklag. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day.**

How is David, an Israelite, able to put forth the possibility that he has "found favor" in the eyes of Achish, a Philistine? Because Achish benefited from David's raids, as reported in verses 8-10. David can't find favor in the eyes of Saul, the king of Israel. Therefore, he turns to the king of Gath. David asks to move away from Gath, where Achish resides, to a supposedly lesser place, "one of the country towns." In reality, David wants to establish a base of operations away from the prying eyes of Achish and his men. In effect, David says to Achish, "This town isn't big enough for the both of us."

Achish falls for it. Probably hoping that David and his army will protect his southeastern flank, Achish grants David the city of Ziklag. The Lord had given Ziklag to the tribe Judah, but Judah had never possessed it (Joshua 15:31). The city fell into the hands of the Philistines but had since been abandoned. David changes the fortunes of Ziklag to such an extent that it became a possession that he passed on to succeeding kings of the southern kingdom of Israel.

David settles down in the land of Philistines. Something doesn't feel right. The future king of Israel, making his home among the enemies of Israel? For David, after living on the run, it must come as a relief to stay in one place for a year and four months. Still, the narrator wants us to know that this isn't a permanent state of affairs. It can't be for the future king of Israel.

## A little relief

Trust your heart, we're told. Go with your gut. If it feels right, it is right.

Like David, you may want a little relief—from sexual pressure, from financial insecurity, from the oppressive routine. Maybe a harmless hookup will help. Maybe cooking the books will help. Maybe a trip to Las Vegas will help. Maybe a couple of clicks on the mouse will help. Like David, crossing over, so to speak, may feel like the best course of action. At least that's what your heart may tell you.

Be advised, though, that if you cross over to the ways of the world, you may be jeopardizing your future, in the manner of David. The entire course of a life can turn on even one decision to trust your heart. Moreover, once you cross over, and crossing over gives you some measure of relief, it's not so easy to cross back. You then may find it very easy to "settle down" in a foreign land, so to speak. Then, throwing off a few restraints, you may find it easier to get what you want by manipulating your world.

David, having crossed over and settled down, now begins living a double life.

## Fooling Achish

### 1 Samuel 27:8-12:

**Now David and his men went up and made raids against the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites, for these were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as far as Shur, to the land of Egypt. 9 And David would strike the land and would leave neither man nor woman alive, but would take away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the garments, and come back to Achish. 10 When Achish asked, “Where have you made a raid today?” David would say, “Against the Negeb of Judah,” or, “Against the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites,” or, “Against the Negeb of the Kenites.” 11 And David would leave neither man nor woman alive to bring news to Gath, thinking, “lest they should tell about us and say, ‘So David has done.’” Such was his custom all the while he lived in the country of the Philistines. 12 And Achish trusted David, thinking, “He has made himself an utter stench to his people Israel; therefore he shall always be my servant.”**

With Ziklag as a base of operations, David conducts raids against Israel’s southern enemies, thereby endearing himself to the people he hopes to rule one day. David’s forays benefit Achish, for David returns to Achish and shares the spoils.

Note, however, the difference between the narrator’s account and David’s account. The narrator reports that David raided “the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites.” David, when questioned by Achish, reports that he raided “Negeb of Judah,” “Negeb of the Jerameelites” and “Negeb of the Kenites.” In actuality, David raids enemies of Israel, but he wants Achish to think that he’s raiding allies of Israel that are also enemies of the Philistines. David leaves no one alive in the cities he attacks, lest word get back to Achish concerning the actual targets of his raids. Dead men tell no tales.

Again, the gullible Achish falls for it. He’s happy with David because David is lining his pockets, and he thinks that David is fighting battles in the interest of the Philistines and against the interest of Israel, the enemy of the Philistines. Moreover, if David is raiding Israel’s allies, then he’s making himself an enemy of Israel. If David, an Israelite, alienates himself from Israel, then

Achish envisions David, an extraordinary military leader, being in his permanent service. Achish thinks he’s sitting pretty. In reality, David has outwitted him again. David’s double life, however, is about to catch up with him.

David conducted such raids “all the while he lived in the country of the Philistines,” even before he set up shop in Ziklag, which explains why he was able to gain the favor of Achish.

## A double life

If you cross over, find a little relief, and settle down, you may then find yourself in David’s shoes: living a double life. People find it easy these days to compartmentalize their lives—living one way in one circle but living in another way in another circle. They behave one way at church and another way at work, one way at home and another way on a business trip. Eventually, they may have to lie in order to make their double lives work. Then, lying becomes a way of life. Many people are able to make a double life work, at least for a while, because they’re able to fool the Achishes of their world.

It’s not easy living a double life, though, is it? David had to kill everyone to make sure his secret didn’t get out. Can you ever be sure you’ve covered your tracks well enough, including your digital tracks? Can you ever be sure that someone at some point isn’t going to talk? Living a double life is enough to make you paranoid, not to mention exhausted. Sooner or later, a double life will catch up with you, as it caught up with David, either because someone finds you out or you can’t keep it up any longer.

## In the wilderness

On the one hand, there is much to be said for trusting your heart. On the other hand, there is nothing to be said for *only* trusting your heart. Life coach Christina Greve, says, “Listen to your heart, and only your heart.” [**Christina Grieve, “When You Trust Your Heart, You Find True Power”** ([christinagreve.com/when-you-trust-your-heart-you-find-true-power/](http://christinagreve.com/when-you-trust-your-heart-you-find-true-power/)).] No! Look what happened to David. Listening only to your heart can cause you to cross over for a little relief, jeopardize your future, settle down into the ways of the world, and live a double life. Is there anything else to trust? Should anyone else have a say? How about God? True, God can speak to our hearts, but so can Satan. David’s heart told him one thing, but God, through a prophet, told him another. David went with his heart instead of the Word.

How about the Son of David, Jesus Christ? The Lord sent David into the wilderness; the Spirit sent the Son of David into the wilderness (1 Samuel 20:22, Matthew 4:1). Saul pursued David; Satan tempted the Son of David. David listened to his heart, left the wilderness, and crossed over to the Philistines; Satan spoke to the heart of the Son of David, tempting him to leave the wilderness and cross over to the ways of the world. Unlike David during his first visit to Gath, the Son of David did not take “these words in his heart”—in his case, the words of Satan (1 Samuel 21:12). Unlike David, the Son of David stayed in the wilderness.

David disregarded the Word of God in the mouth of the prophet; the Son of David embraced the Word of God in the book of Deuteronomy. Consider the last temptation in the wilderness. Satan took the Son of David to a high mountain and showed him not simply a “country town” such as Ziklag but “all the kingdoms of the world and all their glory.” Satan told the Son of David: they’re yours, as long as you “fall down and worship me.” The Son of David, embracing Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20, said, “You shall worship the Lord your God / and him only shall you serve.”

In the wilderness, the Son of God trusted the Word of God.

## Know the Word

Know the Word. Read it and study it. Involve yourself in a community that embraces it. If you know the Word, you can evaluate what your heart says in light of what the Word says. Does the Word of God have anything to say about a harmless hookup, cooking the books, a trip to Las Vegas, or a couple of clicks on the mouse? It helps to know. Because Jesus knew the Word, he was able to resist the words of Satan.

Years ago, I taught the Scriptures to a church of Gypsies in Bulgaria for two weeks. They were mostly new believers who hadn’t been grounded in the Scriptures and weren’t even being taught from the Scriptures. So it was a special delight for me to open the Word of God to them. Many of them were coming up with, and believing, so-called “prophecies” that didn’t necessarily agree with the Scriptures.

One day, after it rained, mushrooms appeared in the countryside, and the Gypsies foraged for them. They served some to me. I hesitated. How do I know I’m not eating something poisonous? In the end, I decided that they must know what they’re doing, so I decided to be a good guest and eat the mushrooms. I survived.

The next day when the church gathered, I said, “I noticed that after it rained, you all went out to pick mushrooms. If I picked mushrooms, I wouldn’t be able to tell the good mushrooms from the bad mushrooms. I would need to take the mushrooms that I picked to one of you, an expert, and you would be able to tell me which mushrooms to keep and which to throw away. Similarly, if you come up with a “prophecy” or hear one, you need to take what you come up with or what you hear to the word of God and evaluate it. You need to know the word, and you need evaluate what you experience in light of it.”

## Know the Lord

However, simply knowing the Word isn’t enough. David knew the Word but trusted his heart instead of the Word. We must not simply know the Word of God; we must also, more importantly, know the Lord. The Word is not an end but a means to an end, and the end is knowing God. In his Word, God speaks to be known. Therefore, read the Word and study it, yes, but also meditate on it and reflect on it to go deep with God.

Jesus was not able to resist the words of Satan solely because he knew the Word. Simply prevailing in a game of Bible Smackdown wasn’t going to win the day. Jesus not only knew the Word of God, he also knew the God of the Word. Look again at his response to the last temptation: “You shall worship the Lord your God / and him only shall you serve.” Jesus not only knew what Deuteronomy said; he also lived what Deuteronomy said: he worshiped the Lord and served him.

The Word shouldn’t simply inform us, it should also lead us into worship. That’s one of the reasons I favor structuring our worship services so that we sing songs of worship not only before the sermon but after the sermon as well. We encounter the Word of God; then we worship the God of the Word.

Deitrich Bonhoeffer writes:

*The Word of Scripture should never stop sounding in your hearts and working in you all day long, just like the words of someone you love. And just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love, but accept them as they are said to you, accept the Word of Scriptures and ponder it in your heart, as Mary did . . . Do not ask “How shall I pass this on?” but “What does this say to me?” Then ponder this word long in your heart until it has gone right into you and taken possession of you. [Dietrich Bonhoeffer, **Life Together** (HarperOne, 2009).]*

We read and study and meditate and reflect not simply for information but also, more importantly, for transformation. In the end, it's not what you know but who you know; it's not knowledge of words but relationship with the Word.

Former pastor Thomas Ashbrook of Church Resource Ministries writes, “

*I realized that I wanted much more than to hear God's voice of instruction and to follow Him. I wanted to really know Him, to experience His love so profoundly that it would push out my own self-hatred and enable me to truly love those around me.” [Thomas Ashbrook, *Mansions of the Heart* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009).]*

## **Trust in the Lord with all your heart**

Should we listen to our hearts? By all means! Indeed, as the transformational coach says, “Your heart speaks truth,” especially if you know the Word of God and the God of the Word. If you're a son or daughter of God through faith in Christ, some beautiful things are stirring in your heart:

—“...God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:5).

—“And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ (Galatians 4:6).

Our hearts are crying out for intimacy with the Father. By all means, listen to your heart, especially if you never trust your heart because you're always conforming to whatever is expected of you—or whatever you think is expected of you.

Shortly after Karen and I were married, we took a trip to Los Angeles to visit her family. For about ten minutes on I-5, there was silence. Silence, in my relational history, meant something was wrong. So for several minutes I tried to figure out what it was. Did I do something wrong? I must have done something wrong. She must be angry with me. Finally, I worked up the courage and said to Karen, “Uh, are you angry with me?” Quietly, she answered, “No.” In my heart, I was convinced that I had done something wrong. My heart was wrong.

Your heart speaks the truth. It just doesn't speak the truth all the time. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, / and do not lean on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5). Don't trust in your heart with all your heart; trust in the Lord with all your heart.