Preschool–Grade 6

David Spares Saul

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Repay evil with good. Respect the people God puts in charge, and let God be the judge.
Bible passage: 1 Samuel 24:1–22. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." *1 Samuel 24:17 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), three sheets of paper in different colors, scissors, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Cut a corner off each colored sheet in a different zigzag shape. Hide the three corners around the room.

1. Opening game: Which Piece Fits? (5–10 minutes)

Hold up the three sheets with their missing corners. Kids hunt for the three hidden corners and then fit each one back on the sheet it came from. Ask: *How do you know which sheet this corner came from?* (The color and the cut edge match exactly.) Say: "Today a man held up a piece cut from a king's robe, and it proved something very important."

2. Bible story: Mine Hand Shall Not Be upon Thee (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to 1 Samuel 24. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Saul hunts David. God had chosen David to be the next king, and King Saul was jealous of him (1 Samuel 18:8–9). When Saul came back from fighting the Philistines, he was told that David was in the wilderness of **En-gedi**, a dry, wild place (24:1). **Look up 1 Samuel 24:2.** Saul took three thousand chosen men to seek David "upon the rocks of the wild goats."

In the cave. By the way were **sheepcotes**, pens for sheep, and a cave. Saul went into the cave, not knowing that David and his men were in the sides of the cave (24:3). **Look up 1 Samuel 24:4.** David's men said, "Behold the day," as if God had handed Saul over to David. David arose and cut off the **skirt** of Saul's robe **privily**: he quietly cut off its edge without Saul knowing. Afterward David's heart **smote** him, which means his conscience hurt him, just for cutting the robe (24:5). **Look up 1 Samuel 24:6.** Saul was "the LORD'S anointed," the king God had chosen and Samuel had anointed with oil (1 Samuel 10:1). David **stayed** (held back) his men and would not let them rise against Saul (24:7).

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Outside the cave. Saul went on his way. David went out after him and cried, "My lord the king." When Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth and bowed (24:8). David asked why Saul listened to men who said David wanted to hurt him (24:9). Some had told David to kill Saul, but David spared him (24:10). **Look up 1 Samuel 24:11.** David held up the skirt of Saul's robe as proof that he had been close enough to harm Saul, and had not. **Look up 1 Samuel 24:12.** David left the judging to God: "The LORD judge between me and thee... but mine hand shall not be upon thee." He called himself a dead dog and a flea, someone too small for the king to chase (24:14), and asked the LORD to "plead my cause," to stand up for him (24:15).

Saul weeps. Saul said, "Is this thy voice, my son David?" and lifted up his voice and wept (24:16). **Look up 1 Samuel 24:17.** Saul admitted David had paid him back good for evil. He said, "I know well that thou shalt surely be king" (24:20). Saul asked David to swear not to cut off his family, and David sware (24:21–22). Saul went home, and David and his men went up to the **hold**, a stronghold or safe place (24:22).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. David's men said God had given Saul into his hand (24:4). Why is it dangerous to say "God wants me to get back at someone"?
2. David's heart smote him just for cutting the robe (24:5). What does it feel like when your conscience bothers you?
3. Saul was doing wrong, but David still respected him as king (24:6, 24:8). How can we respect parents, teachers and leaders, even when we disagree?
4. David said, "The LORD judge between me and thee" (24:12). What does it mean to let God be the judge?
5. Saul cried when David was kind to him (24:16–17). How can kindness change someone who was mean?

Recall questions

1. How many chosen men did Saul take? *(Three thousand, 1 Samuel 24:2)*
2. What did David cut off? *(The skirt of Saul's robe, 24:4)*
3. What did Saul say about David being king? *(That he would surely be king, 24:20)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **righteous** means doing what is right; **rewarded** means paid back; **whereas** means but. Saul said this about David. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "David paid Saul back good for evil. Jesus did even more for us: 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans 5:8, KJV). God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: when someone wrongs you, don't get even. Do one good thing for that person, and tell God about it instead.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. 1 Samuel 24:1: Where was David? *(In the wilderness of En-gedi)*
2. 1 Samuel 24:2: Where did Saul go to seek David? *(Upon the rocks of the wild goats)*
3. 1 Samuel 24:3: What did Saul come to by the way? *(The sheepcotes, where was a cave)*
4. 1 Samuel 24:6: What did David call Saul? *(My master, the LORD'S anointed)*
5. 1 Samuel 24:8: What did David do when Saul looked behind him? *(He stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself)*
6. 1 Samuel 24:14: What two things did David call himself? *(A dead dog and a flea)*
7. 1 Samuel 24:16: What did Saul do after David spoke? *(He lifted up his voice, and wept)*
8. 1 Samuel 24:22: Where did David and his men go? *(Up unto the hold)*

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7. Prayer

"Dear God, You are the judge, and You always do right. When someone wrongs us, help us not to pay them back, but to do good. Help us respect the people You put in charge. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

For the teacher: 1 Samuel 24:3 says Saul "went in to cover his feet"; this lesson tells it simply as "went into the cave." If a child asks what happened between Saul and David later, 1 Samuel 26 tells of a second time David spared Saul.

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