

David and the Ninth Word

1 Kings 15:5

Nutshell: How “upright” was David, per 1 Kings 15:5? His use of misinformation in 1 Samuel 21 seems to congeal most opinion against him. But is all deliberate misinformation lying?

I. Context: The life of David.

II. Text

1 Kings 15:5 *in* that David did that which *is* upright in the eyes of Yahweh, and he did not turn aside from all that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

Review

- A. The Book of Kingdoms, our 1 & 2 Sam + 1 & 2 Kings, is the story of Israel’s kings, beginning with the prophet Samuel, who anointed both of the first two kings, Saul and David
 1. Samuel warned Israel vs. having a king, 1 Sam 10:19, Hos 13:11
 2. **Saul** demonstrated *man’s* kind of rule. God previewed *His* version of king through **David**, 1 Sam 13:14
- ✿ B. 1 Kings 15:5 says David kept God’s commands *except* in the Bathsheba incident. This provides a ‘game-changer’ hermeneutic.
- C. David was God’s chosen king, a *picture* of Messiah, but *not* the Messiah; a *reference point* for later kings of Judah, 2 Kings 14:3
 1. David was anointed king over **Judah**, 2 Sam 2, then **Israel**, 5:1-5.
 2. Trouble between the two begins in 2 Sam 2:12-32.
- D. **DAVID’S WAITING BUSINESS AS KING***
 1. Conquer Jebus (Jerusalem), where Goliath’s head was, 1 Sam 17:54
 2. Retrieved the Ark from its ‘wanderings’, 6:1-19; tragically wrongly, 1 Chron 15:2; then rightly & joyfully
 3. Build a permanent form for the Tabernacle, the Temple.

- ★ 4. God chose *Abraham* to bless all nations. Now He chose *David*'s line to bring forth the King of all nations
 - 5. 1 Sam 20:14 oath in 2 Sam 9. *OBLIGATIONS CAUGHT UP.
- E. David's sin and its consequences
 - 1. David murdered to cover adultery, Ch 11. Now David, though forgiven, *would see continued violence*, ch 12
 - 2. David's son died, *not*, per Deut 24:16, as a cohort. He was 'replaced' by Solomon/ Jedediah, "adored" by God.
- F. Chap 13, Amnon deceived everyone and raped his half-sister Tamar
 - 1. Tamar's brother Absalom counseled her to keep quiet on the matter (declining legal recourse?)
 - 2. He awaited his opportunity and killed Amnon, then fled to his granddad, king in Geshur

Kid-speak: Today we're looking at King David. We know he did one really bad thing, killing Uriah to steal his wife. But did David do anything else bad? That's what we're trying to figure out.

G. *Today, we'll look more closely at 1 Samuel 21. Did David lie when he said he was on a mission from Saul?*

Outline:

- I. Review of Our Five Main Points from Last Time
- II. David's Motive in 1 Samuel 21
- III. The Law
 - A. Exodus 1
 - B. Justice the broader issue than factuality
- IV. Proverbs Subject Study
- V. Summary of Biblical Cases

- H. **Last time**, we concluded (with help from commentators) that:
 - 1. Firstly, "we all stumble in many ways," Jms 3:2a
 - a. The most blameless saints have been blameless *through* their stumbling, Eccl 7:20
 - b. But there is *a stumbling that is not sinning* (besides the presence and influence of our sin nature), Jms 3:2b
 - c. David stumbled, as all do, fell hard once and paid for

it dearly

2. Secondly, 1 Kings 15:5 is a *commendation*
 - a. A bad opinion of David seems out of place
 - b. How many secretly relish David's sin, assuming moral superiority *or* as an excuse for their own sin?
 - c. David was one of the deepest students of the Law (Ps 40:8). Perhaps God used him for special exploration into the complexities a Law-delighter must navigate.
 - d. God sought a man "for Himself, according to His heart," speaking of David. David could only be that by love of and alignment with the "perfect" Law of Yahweh.

Kid-speak: Who did God say was a man whose heart was like God's own heart? David.

- e. In terms of Biblical astuteness, David, I believe, was thinking chess where the rest of us are at checkers
- f. Yet this while still "stumbling" in many ways
3. Thirdly, the phrases "did what was upright in Yahweh's eyes" and "did not turn aside" were formulae repeated with other kings
 - a. We need to further compare these kings lives with these phrases
 - b. Do the phrases leave room for any number of sins? Or are the *exceptional* foibles that arise in the other kings' lives reserved for the end of their lives?
 - c. (Next time)
4. Fourthly, the phrase "all the days of his life" is peculiar to David
 - a. Is this to alert us that David's *seeming* foibles (not to beg the question) require deeper consideration?
 - b. Again, is David, a keen student of the Law, given as a flesh-and-blood display of moral complexities? (Who among us hasn't found that doing what's right can invite ill consequences- maybe hurtful, maybe even evil?)
- ★ 5. Fifthly, the false vs. true witness issue in 1 Sam 21 seems to be the critical fork in the road. Until that point, commentators generally find no fault in David.
 - a. That's what we seek to further unpack today, taking us back to that crossroads for reexamination
 - b. It is a deep and complex subject, but Scriptures are, I

believe, consistent and clear

- I. 1 Sam 21, David gave Ahimelech false information *for the purpose of* absolving Ahimelech from conspiracy against King Saul, should Saul question him (see commentators last time)
 - 1. David's plan didn't work, for Saul killed Ahimelech.
 - a. Was that on David?
 - b. It's an easy condemnation to make, as is the original accusation of lying. (Job was easy to blame too.)
 - 2. But the issue of David misinforming Ahimelech has to be judged on its own
 - a. If, Biblically, David did not lie, Saul's murder was on his own head
 - b. We *know* Saul was unbalanced spiritually/ emotionally/ mentally.
- J. Those who say David lied here generally feel free to continue to find fault with him thereafter
 - 1. *Yet* very few of those who think David lied condemn the misinformation given by the Hebrew midwives *or* Rahab
 - 2. Nor, sticking with David, do many of them disparage:
 - a. David feigning madness later in 1 Sam 21

Kid-speak: When David thought some people were going to kill him, he pretended to be crazy so they'd let him go. It worked. But was it OK to pretend something to save your life? I think God says yes.

- b. David and Jonathan's fictitious report in 1 Samuel 20
 - c. David giving a cover story to Achish to continue his *cherem* raids, 1 Sam 27
 - d. David planting Hushai to give Absalom deceptive counsel, 2 Sam 15
- K. My own watershed moment on the issue
 - 1. I generally accepted 1 Kings 15:5 as normative
 - 2. I heard a respected teacher (ETS) laugh at the chronicler's blinders/ favoritism in 1 Kings 15:5
 - a. Indicating that he understood the verse as an exoneration of David
 - b. I knew I couldn't take his route. How could a verse in the Bible present a slanted account, not the pure truth?

3. The remaining question is whether 1 Kings 15:5 has ‘wiggle-room’ for more foibles than the stated exception. Next time, the kings comparison will be more conclusive.

L. An overview of 1 Sam 21

1. In fleeing from Saul with his men, David came to high priest Ahimelech in Nob
2. David told Ahimelech he was on a secret mission from Saul. He wasn’t.
 - a. He requested bread. Ahimelech only had the bread from last week’s Table of the Presence they were living on.
 - b. Ahimelech knew that that bread, though *set aside* for the priests, was *permissible* to a ceremonially clean person, which David and his men were
3. David repeated his secret mission status in v 8, adding its urgency

M. Clearly, David *meant* to mislead Ahimelech. Why?

1. *He didn’t have to do that to obtain the bread.* He knew the priests would help them if they could.
2. The easiest answer is that he knew Saul might learn that he had been there
 - a. To shield the priests from reprisal, he gave them a fabrication easily recognizable to Saul
 - b. That is, the priests would say they helped David because he was on a mission from Saul; Saul would see that they had acted innocently
- ◆ 3. Had David told “the facts,” the priests would have been immediately endangered by helping him
4. David could in no way anticipate Saul killing priests in any case. If he could have, he would gone hungry.
5. But in fact, wasn’t David *obligated* to give information that would best protect the priests’ lives, even if that was non-factual information?

N. David was a student of the Law. In the Law, in Exodus 1, the Hebrew midwives had saved lives by misinformation on purpose. God openly blessed them. David was following suit.

Kid-speak: The king of Egypt told some Hebrew nurses to kill Hebrew babies when they were born, but the didn’t do it,

and they tricked him so they could keep it up. Was that OK for them to trick him? To save people's lives? I think the Bible says yes.

O. In the Law, factuality was *not the main criteria for lying*.

Justice was the broader criteria, which included whether information might cause harm.

1. Probably 95% + of the time, factual information causing injustice is not an issue
 - a. Therefore, it's easy to just default to the 95% as a rule
 - b. But the 5% is actually primary and preliminary.
Biblically, it's assumed as a prerequisite. Again, it's just that it almost never comes up.
2. The 10 Words at least hint at the need for this broader perspective, using two different words for "false": *sheqer* in Exod 20:16; *shav* in Deut 5:20
 - a. *Sheqer* (113x) means false/ lie
 - b. *Shav* (53x) comes from "desolate" (verb), but is almost always translated "in vain/ vanity"

P. Proverbs takes the Exod 20:15 Ten Words phrase, *ayd sheqer*, "testimony of falsehood," as part of a subject study in Proverbs

1. There are 6 verses with the phrase + 1 with *ayd kazav*, another word for false. 7 verses.
2. Among the other Proverbs verse with *ayd* is **Prov 14:25**, *ayd emeth*, witness of truth
 - a. What does the *true* witness do that keeps him from *false* witness? He "delivers/ saves/ rescues souls," as the Hebrew midwives did
 - b. Solomon is making sure that if we missed it in the Law or in David, he'd put it down as a briefly-stated principle

Kid-speak: If bad people come to my house to hurt me, and I'm hiding from them, would it be better for my wife to tell them, "OK, he's right in here" or "Oh, he's gone for the day"?

3. Hence, *misinformation* that saves lives is "true witness."
Hence, *factual* information that causes harm to the innocent is "false witness."
 - a. We simply have to stop using the word "false" or "lie" in those situations. It's misinformation, but Biblically, it's

not false witness or lying.

- b. Nor should we see it as an exception. By the Proverbs' subject study, we can see that protecting the innocent is baked into the definition of false vs. true witness

Q. Let's briefly survey the main Biblical incidents where misinformation should not be considered sinful

God Giving Proper Misinformation

1. Josh 8:3-8, God said to, in effect, deceive Ai into an ambush
2. 1 Sam 16:1-2, God told Samuel, worried about murderous Saul, to tell Saul that the purpose of his visit was sacrifice, rather than what it was: anointing David
3. 1 Kings 22:19-23, God OK's a "spirit of *sheqer*" to foster a lie among Ahab's prophets
4. 2 Thess 2:11, God will cause followers of Antichrist to "believe the lie"

Proper Human Misinformation Besides Exod 1 & Rahab

5. 2 Kings 6:19, Elisha said he'd take a blinded army seeking *him* to the man they sought. He led them to *Jehoram*.
6. Judges 4:18-21, Jael told Sisera not to fear, then killed him in his sleep
7. 1 Sam 21:13, David feigned madness to escape a life-threatening situation
8. 1 Sam 20, David and Jonathan invent a story to tell Saul to evaluate his reaction
9. 2 Sam 17:19-20, A woman misled Absalom's men about the two men she'd hidden

Kid-speak: That story about my wife: If she said, "Oh, he's gone," did she lie? I think the Bible says no.

10. Jer 38:24-28, Zedekiah told Jeremiah to mislead the princes about their interaction
11. 1 Sam 27:10, David told Achish he'd raided Judean territory when he'd attacked *cherem* peoples

R. Besides all we've said, Jesus spoke approvingly of David's

1 Samuel 21 mission to obtain bread, Matt 12:3-4 * →

1. Would he have done this if David had lied on that occasion?
2. ("Not permissible" for him to eat, meaning the bread's

specific purpose was for the priests)

- S. 1 Samuel 21 is the off-ramp to confusion for many commentators on David, since they fail to correctly assess the purpose of his misinformation
1. Nor do most of them even have a category for righteous misinformation
 2. On a practical note, it's sad when Christians protecting the innocent think they need God's forgiveness for lying. We owe them better teaching.

IV. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, "Uphold the strengthless")
← * Mercy takes natural priority. God is *looking* to have mercy.

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V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, "Convince, rebuke"): **What have I done wrong?**  
**How have I lost righteousness?**  
Have I let the Bible define good and evil information?

VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, "Exhort/encourage"):  
**How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?**  
I will seek to take in all Biblical factors in defining lies.

VII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How will I avoid the error and follow Christ?**  
Lord, I don't want to call someone a liar whom You don't.

Vision: Lying and false witness are probably synonymous, but false witness may be broader, since it's in the 10 Words. If David (and the others) gave *true* witness to save lives, they did not give *false* witness. If they did not give false witness, they did not *lie*. I've adjusted my definitions accordingly.

FACTUALITY is a partial and, if used alone, stilted approach for judging truth. JUSTICE is the broader consideration.

**Factuality** is a great and noble duke to rule in this arena, (which covers all of life), but only when sitting under prince **Justice**.