

# (1 Samuel) How to Get an Answer From God

by David Guzik

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*David's journey illustrates the importance of seeking God's will through prayer and obedience in the face of challenges.*

**Duration:** 27:20

**Topics:** "Seeking Guidance", "Faith And Trust"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of David and his encounter with Saul in the city of Keilah. The people of Keilah were afraid of Saul, who had a history of violence and had massacred the priests in the city of Nob. However, they looked to David for leadership and protection. David sought guidance from the Lord before deciding to help the people of Keilah and fight against the Philistines. Despite the danger, God promised David victory in the battle. The preacher emphasizes the importance of humbling oneself and seeking God's direction in difficult situations, and relates this story to the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

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## Transcript

1 Samuel chapter 23, beginning at verse 1, Then they told David, saying, Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors. David was on the run from King Saul. There was a price on his head, either literally or figuratively.

Every step was a step of danger for David. While he was a fugitive from Saul, he was hiding out in the strongholds of the wilderness. But the prophet Gad came to David and told him, Get yourself out of the stronghold and go into the land of Judah.

That was an unsafe thing for David to do, from all outward observation. The safest thing he could do was stay in those strongholds. But God didn't want him there.

And now we see, in 1 Samuel 23, verse 1, why God didn't want him there. Because God wanted David to help the people of the city of Keilah. Now, please notice this.

When David was in the strongholds, back in chapter 22, he was safe. He was protected. But he couldn't be of much help to anybody else.

You know, the analogy just struck me as I was teaching on this last night, how we often do that in our own lives. We sort of separate ourselves out from other people or other situations, and we put ourselves in a

stronghold, so to speak. And we're very safe there.

Nobody can touch us. Nobody can hurt us. We can't help much of anybody, either.

And that was David's place at this time. He said, get out of your strongholds, go to the land of Judah. Even though it's a dangerous thing, David didn't know why, but now he does.

Because now the request comes from the Israelite city of Keilah. It says, come and help us. The Philistines are fighting against us, and they're robbing the threshing floors.

The threshing floors were the place where the grain was processed on its way to becoming flour. And on the threshing floor where the grain that was harvested was broken up, and the grains of the wheat were being broken away from the kernels and the husk and all that. In the midst of all that, the Philistines just come and rob the Israelites.

There you are, you're a farmer. You've worked for months and months to bring in the crop, and then finally now when it's come to fruition, the Philistines come and steal it from you. All your work's come to nothing.

The Israelites were oppressed. They needed help. And so the call goes out.

Did the call go out to King Saul? He's the king of the Israelites. Why not call up King Saul? Why not tell Saul, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they're robbing the threshing floors? Perhaps the message did go out to Saul. Maybe the message went out to Saul, and he didn't care very much.

Maybe Saul was too busy fighting David to protect his own people. We don't know the exact reason why. Maybe they didn't even bother sending the message to Saul.

For whatever reason, the message came to David. Now what would you do? Somebody cries out to you and says, Help me. Save me.

I need your help. Some people would say, You know what? This is none of my business. This is Saul's problem.

It's not my problem. Forget it. Other people might say, What? Somebody needs help? I might be able to help them.

Let's go. I can fix this problem out of my way, and let me do it. Can I suggest to you that either one of those responses is wrong? You know what the right response is? To do what David did.

Look at verse 2. Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and attack these Philistines? And the Lord said to David, Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah. Isn't that beautiful? David was faced with an opportunity. David was faced with the opportunity to help somebody, to save somebody, to make a difference in a situation.

But it's filled with danger. It's a risky thing, but it seems like it's a good thing. What do you want me to do? Lord, I will inquire of the Lord.

Isn't that a precious thing? How often do we get into trouble in our lives because we fail to inquire of the Lord? We either say no, or we say yes, without inquiring of the Lord. We don't seek God. Now, later on, when the whole thing is blown up in our face, and we're in a lot of trouble, then we inquire of the Lord.

Lord, get me out of this. Lord, what's your will? How much better to inquire of the Lord at the very beginning? You know, I think David had to have something in his inquiry of the Lord that we have to have also. You can't effectively inquire of the Lord if you already have your mind made up.

If you have already decided, I'm going to do this, or I'm not going to do that. If you've already decided that in your mind, what good is it for you to come to God and say, well, okay, God, please guide me? Because you know you really don't mean it. What you mean is, God, give me a rubber stamp for what I already want to do.

Do you know the greatest key in understanding the will of God? I know I've got you on the edge of your seat, because everybody wants to know the will of God. Everybody has a question that is, Lord, what's your will? I just want to do your will. Lord, how can I know your will? Friends, the greatest key to knowing the will of God in your life is to have a surrendered and a submitted heart to Jesus Christ.

A heart that says, I will do your will no matter what it is. That's the kind of heart David had to have. That's the kind of heart we have to have.

To come before God and say, Lord, if you tell me yes, I'll be happy with that. If you tell me no, I'll be happy with that. I just want to do your will.

Oftentimes, we never hear the will of God, because we've decided already what it is before we ever really seek Him. Well, David wasn't like that. He inquired of the Lord.

And it says here, David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and attack these Philistines? And the Lord said to David, Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah. And David's men said to him, Look, we're afraid here in Judah. How much more if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? Now, David says, Okay, I know what we're going to do.

The Lord's telling me to do this. Let's go forward and do it. And what did David's men say to him? No way.

What, David, are you crazy? We're in enough trouble right here. We've got our hands full with escaping the murderous rage of Saul. You expect us to go and fight against the Philistines? David, isn't one enemy enough? Don't you think it's enough for us just to be bothering with Saul? Now he wants us to expose ourselves to the danger that we could be facing from the Philistines.

David, you're crazy. You're nuts. We're not going there.

Now, I think that that was fine for David's men to share that with him. They needed to know how they... David, I should say, needed to know how they felt. If they disagreed, they should have said it.

But what should David do with that? There's two wrong reactions you could have. David could have said to these men, Wow, you don't think we should go? Well, then I guess we're not going. And David could forget all about what the Lord had told him to do.

That would have been a wrong reaction. That would have meant that David would have been operating as if God was leading him in a democracy. Where, well, what do you do? He speaks to his 400 men, and David's number 401.

And, you know, well, guys, what should we do? And the votes are split. 201 to 200. Well, I guess we do it to 201, won't we? That's not God's way.

Not in this situation. So David would have been wrong to say, Well, okay, you guys say don't go, we don't go. But David would have also been wrong if his attitude would have been, Ah, who cares? I don't care what you guys say.

God's told me. I don't even need to listen to you. Come on, we're going.

That would have been a bad attitude as well. Because who knows if the Lord isn't speaking to David through his men. Maybe the Lord wants to guide him through these men.

So what do you do, David? You inquire of the Lord again. Look at it there in verse 4. Then David inquired of the Lord once again. And the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will deliver the Philistines into your hand.

Now, not only does God tell David to go to Keilah, He also tells him that you're going to have victory there. I'm going to deliver the Philistines into your hands. Here's my promise to you, David.

It's not just that I'm telling you to go there. I'm telling you you're going to have victory. Isn't that precious? David hears the direction of the Lord.

He says, okay, man, this is what we're doing. They say, David, you're crazy. David says, well, I've got to consider that.

Let me take it to the Lord again. And he does. And God confirms it.

And he tells him, go, go. I want you to fight this battle. Look at how it turns out here, verse 5. And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines to strike them with a mighty blow and took away their livestock.

So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. Isn't that beautiful? David, go. He inquired of the Lord.

He's moving in God's will. He's being led by God. He's seeking God's direction.

And the Lord guided David. That's beautiful enough. Then look at verse 6. Now, it happened when Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, fled to David at Keilah that he went down with an ephod in his hand.

You might read that and you say, so? You know, there's a lot in that verse if we understand everything that's going on in it. First of all, who was this fellow, Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech? He was a priest. He was probably the high priest.

And in the previous chapter, we saw that Saul, in an act of cold-blooded murder, slaughtered all the priests in his family and their families, and somehow, Abiathar escaped this slaughter. Okay? Abiathar, a priest, escaping from Saul's slaughter of the priests. Fine.

Look at it now again, verse 6. When Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, fled to David at Keilah, that he went down with an ephod in his hand. You say, oh, an ephod. Well, that makes sense, doesn't it? Now it's all clear to me.

You know what an ephod is? An ephod is a part of the garments that a priest would wear in the Old Testament. It was like an apron. Now, the work of a priest was a bloody work.

You did a lot of work cutting animals and sacrificing them and pouring out their blood before God. It was messy. And so, just like a butcher would wear an apron, so the priest wore an apron.

And they called that special apron that the priest wore an ephod. Now, there was one very special ephod in all of Israel. The priest just wore a regular white one.

Yeah, that's fine. But the high priest wore a special blue ephod and there was something very special attached to that blue ephod. The breastplate of judgment.

And what it was, was it was sort of a decorative thing that attached with little gold chains to the ephod and it stood there right on the high priest's chest. And this was the high priest's uniform, his ceremonial garments. And so he would put the ephod on and attached to the ephod would be the breastplate of judgment.

And on that breastplate would be 12 stones. Three rows of four with the names of the tribes of Israel inscribed on each stone. It was a very powerful picture.

It was the Lord's way of saying, hey, Mr. High Priest, when you go and administer before me, you've got to have the people on your heart. There they are, right on your heart. See? You can read their names.

They're right on your heart. Now, tucked inside of that breastplate was something called the Urim and the Thummim. You say, Urim and the Thummim? What's that? And let me give you the studied research of many Bible scholars as to what the Urim and the Thummim are.

We really don't know for sure. Now, the ancient rabbis give us some ideas. As I've been able to research it, the most reliable idea I can find about what the Urim and the Thummim are is that they were a white and a black stone.

And we don't know exactly what the Urim and Thummim were, but we know what they were used for. The Urim and the Thummim were used to find out the will of God, to inquire of the Lord. And basically, this is how it would work.

The High Priest would ask God a question that would have a yes or no answer. For example, look at the question David asked in verse 2. This is a question that would have a yes or no answer. Shall I go and attack these Philistines? And the Lord could answer yes or no to that.

Well, they would ask that question. The priest would ask it before the Lord. He'd reach his hand into the breastplate.

There was apparently a little pocket or pouch in it where the Urim and the Thummim were held. And the priest would pull out a rock. And that stone would either be a white stone or a black stone.

The white stone said yes. The black stone said no. Now, think about that.

And you say, wow, that's how they determined the will of God? They'd ask God a question, reach into their pocket, and whatever they pulled out, that's the answer? I know what some of you are thinking. Part of you are thinking. Maybe it's split evenly down the middle.

Half of you are thinking, that is so goofy. I mean, what is this, the magic eight ball of the Old Testament? You know, you ask a question, shake it up, and just wait for it to appear? I mean, is that any way to

discern the will of God? Second thing some of you are thinking, you're thinking, man, I wish I had a set of those. Because I would love to be able to just ask God a yes or no question, reach in my pocket, and pull out, well, it's white, it's yes, or it's black, it's no.

Thank you, Lord. You know, I think this is the exact reason why God never told us exactly what the Urim and the Thummim were. If God would have given us very specific instructions and said the Urim and the Thummim shall be two stones, one white, one black, shaped a certain way, blah, blah, blah, and given us the whole explanation and exactly how they were used and such, you know what would happen.

You'd be able to go down to the Christian bookstore and you would see a whole wall filled with different companies giving their own Urim and Thummim for you to take home and use from God. Now, you need to understand that God has given you a superior way to know the will of God than the Urim and the Thummim. He's given you, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, if you're born again by the Spirit of God, you have the indwelling Spirit of God within you.

And you have God's Word to guide you. As a matter of fact, I think this is why the Urim and the Thummim worked. The Urim and the Thummim worked not because there was anything special or magical in a white rock, in a black rock.

The Urim and the Thummim worked because God gave the instructions for their use in His Word. Therefore, when somebody was using the Urim and the Thummim, they were obeying God's Word. This is such an important principle.

And maybe some of you here this morning are sort of tortured inside because you want so badly to know the will of God. If you want to know the will of God, first of all, find out what God has clearly said in His Word. Walk in that.

Live in that. Lord, what are you saying to me? Clearly in your Word. Find out what God's will is as it's clearly revealed.

Then, to the very best of your ability, fulfill what God has given you to do that you already know. Don't you think it's funny that oftentimes we as Christians will be in a place of direct disobedience in our Christian lives right now, and then we'll ask God to show us His will. Don't you think God looks down from heaven and He says, why should I reveal my will to you? You're not doing what I've already told you to do.

And you want me to tell... What, are you going to keep asking my will until there's something you like? Until there's something you're just choosing to do? No, God says, if you want to know my will, show a passion for fulfilling it right where you are right now. And so, the ephod came to David and he had the priest, he had the guidance, and might I say that the presence of the high priest and the ephod and the urim and the thummim, that was more precious to David than a thousand mighty soldiers. To know the will of God.

To seek the will of God. That's power in your life. Therefore, when you step forward, you're not guessing, you're not wondering.

You say, this is God's will for me. I know God wants me to do this. Now, notice it doesn't end here.

Verse 7. Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah. So Saul said, God has delivered him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars. Then Saul called all the people

together for war to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.

Wasn't that interesting? Now, David is a man who inquires of the Lord and God speaks to him and says, okay, this is what I want you to do. Saul is a man who doesn't inquire of the Lord, but he thinks he knows what God's will is. He hears that David is set up in this city and that David can now be located and captured and dealt with.

And what's Saul's reaction? He says, praise the Lord. Thank you, God. You've given me my enemy, David.

You want to say, hello, Saul, what are you thinking? This is sin. This is wickedness. God isn't blessing you in this.

Think about it, Saul. Think about what God wants you to do and where He wants you to be. So again, Saul is completely off of the mark.

He completely is misunderstanding God's will and God's ways. And instead of saying, listen, let's leave David alone. Look at what he does in verse 8. It says, then Saul called all the people together for war to go down to Keilah and to besiege David and his men.

Do you understand what's happening there? Saul is assembling the army of Israel not to fight against the Edomites, not to fight against the Moabites, not to fight against the enemies of Israel. He's assembling the army of Israel to fight against David. David.

His own son-in-law. David, the man who killed Goliath. David, the man who had led Israel on many successful expeditions against the Philistines.

That's who Saul is focused against. Isn't this tragic? How warped the heart can be. And if you want to see how warped it can be, would Saul bring the army of Israel to the city of Keilah to save the city of Keilah when it was besieged by the Philistines? Nah, he didn't care about that.

But when David is there, and he can capture David, then Saul is excited about going to the city of Keilah. Well, we know the Lord's going to protect David. We've just got to see how.

Verse 9. When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring the ephod here. Then David said, O Lord God of Israel, your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy this city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down as your servant has heard? O Lord God of Israel, I pray tell your servant.

And the Lord said, He will come down. Then David said, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, They will deliver you. Well, that was bad news for David.

David must have scratched his head and said, Yeah, a lot of gratitude from the people of Keilah, huh? No good deed goes unpunished, David must have been thinking. But then again, we can kind of sympathize with the people in the city of Keilah. I mean, they were afraid.

They had heard how Saul had wiped out a whole village of Israelites at the city of Nob when Saul massacred the priests. They knew the bloodthirsty character and nature of Saul and they were afraid of him. Isn't that tragic? They're afraid of Saul, but they look to David for the things that the king should be doing.

Saul is becoming more and more distant, more and more out there, more and more rebellious against God. And so what does David do? He gets this warning, verse 13, So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah and went whatever way they could go. Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, so he halted the expedition.

All right, let's conclude just with a few final points here. First of all, the broad, obvious point. Did you pick up in this whole little narrative here how you can be in the center of God's will and still be in a lot of trouble? All right, that was David.

Did the Lord tell him to go to Keilah? Yes. Did David do what the Lord commanded him to do? By the way, that's a remarkable point right there, isn't it? David sought the will of God. He inquired the will of God.

All this, he knew the will of God, but also David did the will of God. We can know God's will backward and forward. We can talk about it.

We can discuss it like experts with other people. We can say, oh, marvelous, and then thinking, well, you've got the Urim and the Thummim and you've got this and, you know, what's the predestination of three wills? Oh, theological discussion of God's will. Oh, beautiful.

Are you doing it? David did God's will. He knew it. He understood it.

And he put himself in a real mess. That's okay. The Lord would see him out of it.

But sometimes, when we're in the midst of a mess, we think, I couldn't be in God's will. Maybe you are. Maybe you're not.

But sometimes, obeying God will put us in a place where we have to trust him even more. And that's where David was. Secondly, we notice that David had to find deliverance through taking humble action.

Should we remind ourselves of what kind of man David was? David was a warrior. David was the kind of man who could look at the giant Goliath and stare him straight in the eye and say, you're going down. This is a brave man.

This is not the kind of man who backs down from a battle. But what did David have to do? He had to retreat and sneak away from the city of Goliath. Friends, do you understand that this was David going against his instincts and humbling himself? I'm sure that there was part of David that said, I'm going to stand up and fight.

I'm not taking this from Saul or anybody else. You want a battle? Let's have a battle. Let's get it on, Saul.

I'm sure there was something in David that wanted that, but he didn't. He took the humble course of saying, we'll retreat. Friends, a lot of times our salvation is found in taking the humble course.

And finally, I want you to see how this pictures for us the glorious work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. Do you understand what I mean by that? You see, let's understand that Jesus was the descendant of many human ancestors. Jesus descended from Abraham.

Jesus descended from Isaac. Jesus descended from Adam. Jesus descended from Noah.

I mean, there's any number of biblical characters that Jesus descended from. But you know, Jesus has never given the title Son of Noah. He's never given the title Son of Abraham.

He's given the title Son of David. I want you to see this. Kela was a city that was destined for destruction.

And what did David do? He said, no, I'll move myself and make myself the target for destruction so that the destruction of Saul won't be targeted against Kela. That's exactly what happened. It says here, David escaped from Kela and so Saul halted the expedition.

Do you realize that's exactly what Jesus Christ did for you? You were a target for God's judgment. You deserved it. I deserved it.

We all deserve God's judgment because we sin against God. We rebel against Him. But what Jesus did was through His humble action, He said, I'll be the target.

And God diverted His judgment away from us, put it upon Jesus at the cross, and now the Lord God says, Jesus took the punishment that you deserved. Aren't you happy that the Son of David did the same thing for you and I? And doesn't this give us the picture of exactly what God's work is in David's life right now? Without David really knowing it, in these terms, the Lord God is making David more like Jesus. You know, that's His work in your life, too.

You wonder, Lord, why have you put me in this situation where I don't know what to do? That's where David was in. Lord, why have you put me in this situation where it seems like people might betray me? That's the situation David was in. Lord, why have you put me in this situation where people are attacking me, like Saul was attacking David? Lord, why have you put me in this situation where I have to humble myself to see you work? Lord, why? Why? Why? Because He wants to make you more like Jesus.

That's God's great goal. Everything that God does in your life is to make you more like Jesus. Because the Lord has put Jesus' life into you.

Now He's working it out of you in every aspect. Let Him do that work and receive the life of Jesus in you today. Let's pray and ask God to cement that work in our hearts.

Father, we do thank you this morning. We ask, Lord Jesus, that you just fill our hearts with an awareness of the greatness of the Son of David. Lord, we're blown away by David's wisdom in seeking you, by his obedience, by his courage, by his patience, But Lord, all of those things don't compare at all to what Jesus Christ has done for us.

So we thank you for David, Lord, but we want Him to point us to the greater Son of David, to Jesus Christ our Lord. Make us more like Jesus, Lord, as you work your glorious life in us through what Jesus did on the cross. Thank you, Lord.

We love you. We praise you together this morning in Jesus' name, Amen.

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