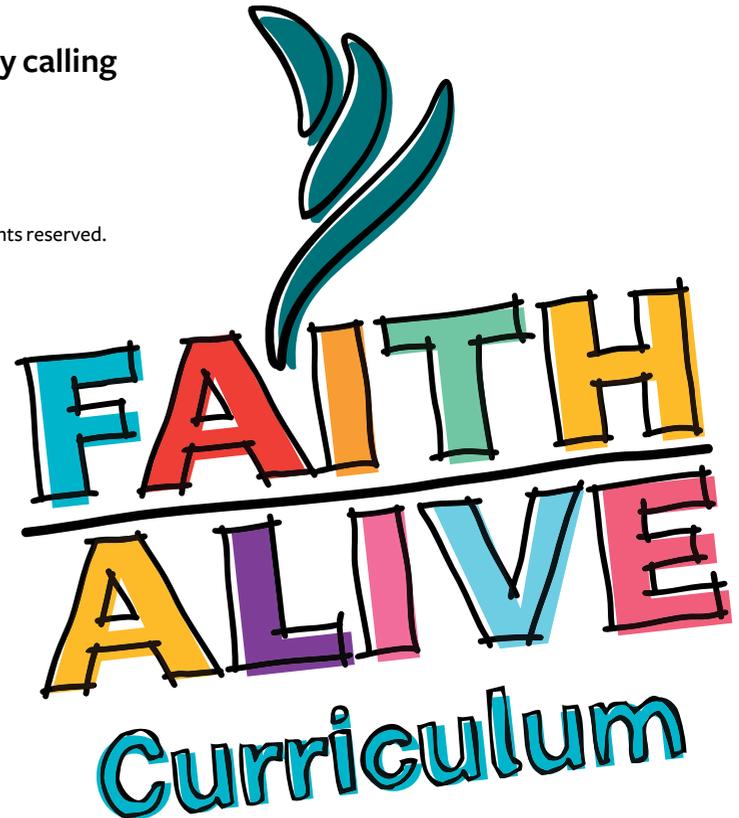


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▶ Tell the Story. Live the Story.

Dear Family,

Our unit theme for the next four weeks will be *God Is in Control—No Matter What*. That’s an important message for all of us—children and adults—to hear in a society where we are hammered daily with bad news and violence, with cries of war and threats of terrorism, with illness, divorce, and brokenness of all kinds. In the face of all evil and all pain and all hatred, our God stands strong and firm. Do not fear—I am in control, God says. Peace, be still.

As we focus on this important theme, we’ll be studying stories about King David, a man who loved and served God but also sinned and suffered, as we do. We’ll also be looking at Solomon, a king who seemed to have it all, but who sometimes forgot who was really in control.

As we study these important themes, the children will be reviewing or learning the words of Psalm 23, a psalm that offers a great deal of comfort to each and every one of us as we face suffering, fear, and even death.

At the end of this unit your child will bring home a special comic book that includes all the stories we heard together during these four weeks, plus some puzzles and activities that he or she will want to do at home. Please pray for our group as we study and talk about our amazing God during these coming weeks.

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Sincerely,

Memory Challenge

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life
and I will dwell in the house of the
LORD
forever.

—Psalm 23, TNIV

Memory Challenge

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—

they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the
LORD
my whole life long.

—Psalm 23, NRSV

Script: David and Saul



Welcome to En Gedi. After hiking through the dry Judean desert and over dusty brown rock, you finally see a pocket of green on the mountainside where a stream of cool, refreshing water tumbles down. Take the rock out of your pocket and be thankful you and your leader David survived the rugged hills.



What else have you collected? Ah yes, the horn of a wild goat. You saw the goats scampering up the sides of the mountain. They also ate the lush green foliage growing near sparkling pools of water.



David says you can't swim in the pools of En Gedi forever. King Saul could appear any time. He's hot on David's trail—he wants to kill David. "Fill your goatskin water bottle with the cool, clear water," David says, "then follow me." You thank David for making sure none of you go thirsty. Then you hurry along beside him.



"There's a cave up ahead," David says, pointing to a dark opening in the rock. You crouch down and follow David and the others into the cave. It's cool back here, but very dark. You quickly find the man who is carrying the lighted torch and light your torch from his fire. With all six hundred of you, and with the heat from the torches, it is no longer cool in here. Where is your goatskin water bottle? Never has a drink tasted so good! David assigns several of you to take turns watching at the entrance for any sign of Saul and his men.



Whoosh. Whoosh. What is that? A bat. No—hundreds of them. This cave is filled with bats. Shouldn't they be sleeping? The lights of your torches must have made them think it's daytime, and they are searching for darker places to sleep in the cave. Yuck. They leave a few droppings on your shoulder.



Your guard's voice rises just above a whisper. "Put out your torches, men. Move further back into the cave." Oh no. Not with the bats! "King Saul's soldiers are approaching the cave," the guard says. You grab your shield. You are not afraid. You want to stay close to the action and protect David. No matter what the reputation of Saul's bloodthirsty men, duty comes first in your mind.



A shadow fills the entrance of the cave, a shadow that leaves a footprint. It's a man. He can't see you, but you see him. Unbelievable. It's King Saul himself! You try to swallow and call out to David. But your voice is paralyzed with fear.

Someone standing near David has a plan. "David," he says, "this is your chance. The Lord said he would give your enemy into your hands, and there he is!"

David creeps along the side of the cave wall. He knows that the king can't see him. You are still trying to figure out what King Saul is doing. Now you see but wish you hadn't. He's going to the bathroom.



David crouches down behind Saul. One swift plunge with his sword and Saul will get what he deserves. You look up to see David's sharp silhouette as he silently swings the sword up high. You see the sword strike.



All you hear is a slight ripping sound. No screaming or staggering of a wounded king. David returns to you with a piece of the king's robe. Why didn't David kill the tyrant?

He holds up the piece of royal robe. "I lifted my sword against God's chosen king. But I was able to stop before I did any real damage."

"But this was your chance to kill him," growls one of the men.

"No," David says. "King Saul is God's anointed one."

You think of how miserable King Saul has made your life these past few months. Eating wild roots, drinking stale water, and growing blisters on your feet. If David was afraid to do the deed, he could have called on any one of you. You'd bloody your sword to get rid of the mad king. But David says, "It's not our call to attack Saul. The Lord's in charge. God will protect us and honor our obedience."

David must be crazier than Saul. You haven't followed David over rocks and deserts just for him to snip off a piece of royal robe. You punch your fist against the hard side of the cave. Your knuckles are bleeding. Does David see that you are upset with his weakness?

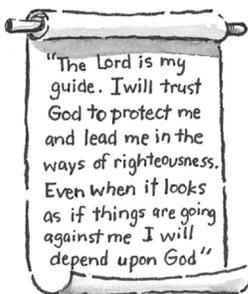
David turns his back on you and walks out of the cave straight toward King Saul. Perhaps some sense has sunk into David's head. You creep up to the cave entrance to watch.

"My Lord the king," David calls out to Saul. King Saul spins around, startled. David bows down to Saul. You hear David say, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'? See with your own eyes how the Lord gave me a chance when you were in the cave. My men urged me to kill you, but I didn't. See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe, but I didn't kill you. Now you know that I've done nothing wrong, but you are hunting me down. God made you the king. It is not for me to take that away from you. Yet you think you have the right to kill me as if I'm a flea that annoys you. God will have to judge between us."



You stare, wide-eyed. David wasn't afraid of the king after all. He's just letting Saul know that God is in control.

Saul lifts his robe. He sees the jagged corner. He begins to tremble and cry out loud. "David, my son. I have treated you badly. I've never known a man who lets his enemy get away unharmed. Now I know you deserve to be king."



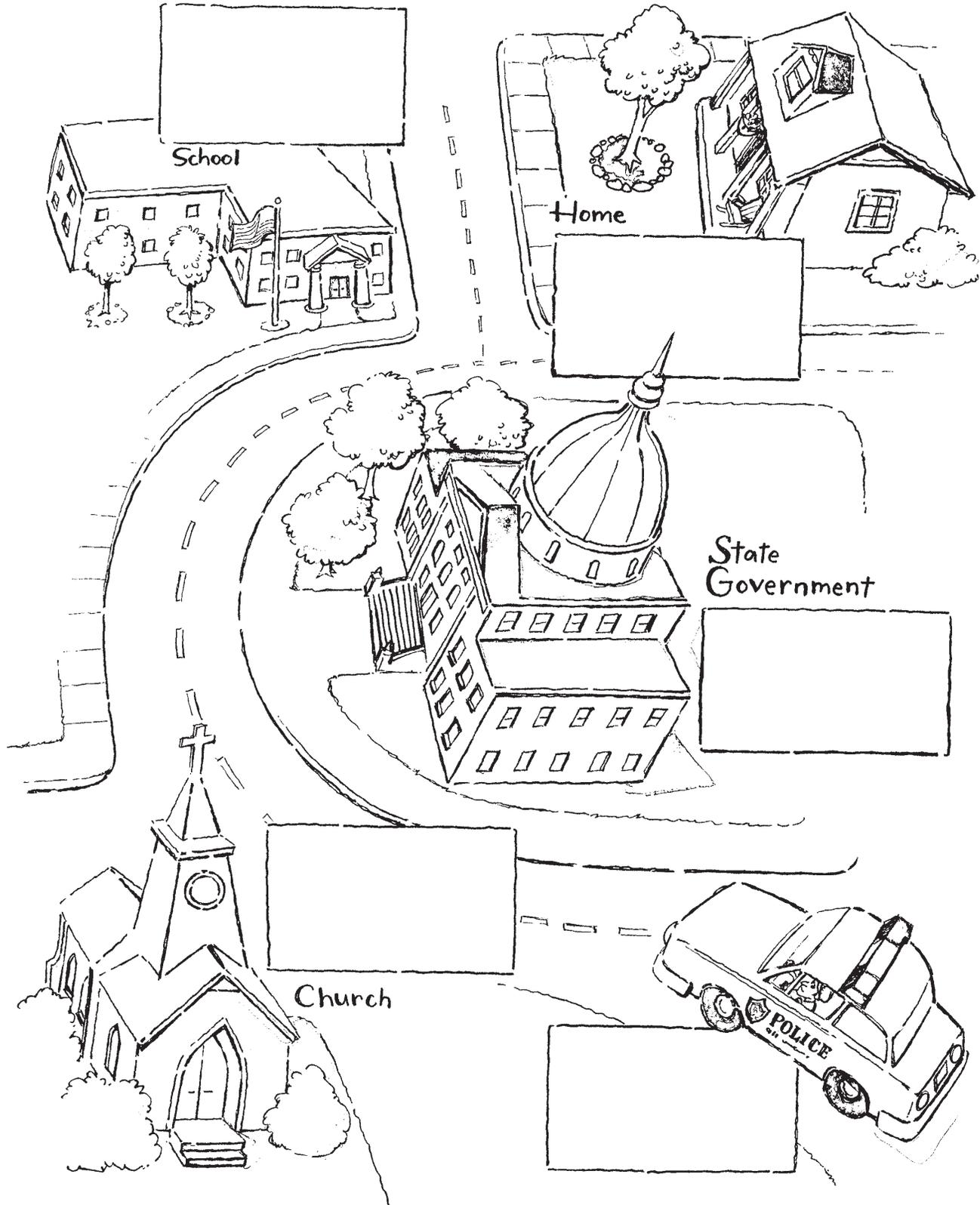
"The Lord is my guide. I will trust God to protect me and lead me in the ways of righteousness. Even when it looks as if things are going against me I will depend upon God"

Then that proud king gets on his knees and begs David for protection over his family. I wouldn't have bet all the goatskins, bearskins, and deerskins in the world that I'd ever see this happen.

You drop to the ground. All that David has taught you comes to mind. You also want God to be in charge in your life. **(Ask child with scroll to read it aloud.)**

Who's in Charge Map

God has placed people in authority over us. And God wants us to respect our leaders, just as David did. Travel through the map and write down the names or draw figures of the people in authority for each box.



Cave Search

David showed his respect for Saul. Complete each sentence below, telling how David honored Saul. Use the coordinates to find the correct letters for each word. You can check your answers in 1 Samuel 24.

10								U		
9	H	O				B				
8			S							M
7		C				V			A	
6	I		F							
5		K							N	
4			L				Y		R	
3	D									
2			E					G		
1					T					
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J

Saul looked for David in the Desert of. .
C2 I5 H2 C2 A3 A6

Saul took men with him.
E1 A9 I4 C2 C2 E1 A9 B9 H10 C8 I7 I5 A3

David came upon Saul and cut off a of Saul's .
B7 B9 I4 I5 C2 I4 I4 B9 F9 C2

David called out to Saul, "My , the !"
C4 B9 I4 A3 B5 A6 I5 H2

David told Saul, "Some urged me to you but I because you are the Lord's ."

Saul begged David to have and not harm the family of Saul.
J8 C2 I4 B7 G4

Use the grid to create a code for a word or phrase that describes what God desires of us when he places leaders in our lives.

Plot a clue from the grid for a friend. (Add more letters if you need them.)

David—Out of Control

Characters

Narrator, David, Bathsheba, Uriah, Nathan

Narrator: David has been a wonderful king. He hasn't made the same mistakes Saul made. No, David has been a king after God's own heart. David returned the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and led his people to worship God alone. So God has been with the people, and they have won many battles over their enemies. Things couldn't be better.

David has been king now for about twenty years. Although he's about fifty years old, he's still as handsome as ever. . . . Straighten your robe, David; it's a bit crooked. That's better.

King David has a strong army. Joab is David's commanding officer. At this time Joab and his soldiers are fighting a great battle against the Ammonites. David has stayed in his palace in Jerusalem instead of going to battle.

It's spring. The rainy season is over, and warm breezes are blowing across Jerusalem. It's a perfect night for a stroll on the rooftop of the palace.

David, what has caught your attention?

David: Messenger! See that woman down there taking a bath on her rooftop? Find out who she is.

Narrator: The messenger reports back to David that the woman's name is Bathsheba. She is the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David's soldiers. Uriah has gone with Joab to fight against the Ammonites.

David: [*sighs*] She's beautiful! . . . Messenger! Bring Bathsheba to the palace.

Narrator: When Bathsheba comes to the palace, David sleeps with her, even though she is already married to Uriah. This is, of course, a very great sin. Soon afterward Bathsheba comes to David.

Bathsheba: [*bows head*] Your majesty . . . I have news you must know. I'm going to have your child.

Narrator: When David gets this news, he has a decision to make. He can either admit to God and the country of Israel that he has sinned. Or he can try to hide his sin. David searches for a way to cover up his sin.

David: Messenger! Run. Tell Joab to have Uriah sent home from battle immediately.

Narrator: When Joab receives the message, he sends Uriah to David.

Uriah: What is it, your majesty?

David: Ah, Uriah, you're looking well, my good man. A faithful soldier you are. How is Joab? The others? And the state of war?

Uriah: All is well, your majesty.

David: Yes. Yes. That is good. Uriah, you are loyal. And faithfully you have served your country. Go home and spend the night with your wife. You must miss her greatly. Take a hot bath. Eat a home-cooked meal, and get a good night's rest.

Narrator: David wants everyone to think that Uriah is the baby's father so no one will suspect David. But instead of going home, Uriah sleeps at the door of the king's house with the servants. In the morning David finds out and calls Uriah again.

David: Uriah! What's wrong with you? Why didn't you go home last night?

Uriah: *[bowing]* Your majesty, how could I go to my house for a steak dinner with my wife while my lord Joab and all of his servants are camping out in an open field? *[shakes head]* I just couldn't do it.

Narrator: Frustrated, David sends Uriah back to the army with a letter for Joab. In the letter David tells Joab to put Uriah in the most dangerous spot in the battle—a place where he's sure to get killed. David wants to marry Bathsheba, but he can only do that if Uriah is dead. Uriah gives Joab the letter, but Uriah doesn't know what it says.

And Joab obeys David. He does what David orders in the letter. Uriah dies in the front line of battle. *[remove Uriah's costume]* As soon as the news arrives that Uriah is dead, David marries Bathsheba. A few months later, Bathsheba has a baby boy.

But the Lord is very angry at what David has done. He sends Nathan the prophet to David.

Nathan: King David, a terrible thing has happened. A rich man with great flocks of sheep has stolen a lamb from a poor man. It was the only lamb the poor man had. It was his children's pet, and he himself loved it very much. But the rich man, not wanting to kill one of his own sheep for a meal with his dinner guests, took the poor man's lamb.

David: Who is this cruel man? He deserves to die!

Nathan: You are the rich man I am talking about! The Lord chose you to be king, and gave you many wives and children. God made you rich and great. Yet you murdered Uriah to get his wife. For this the Lord will send a dreadful punishment upon you.

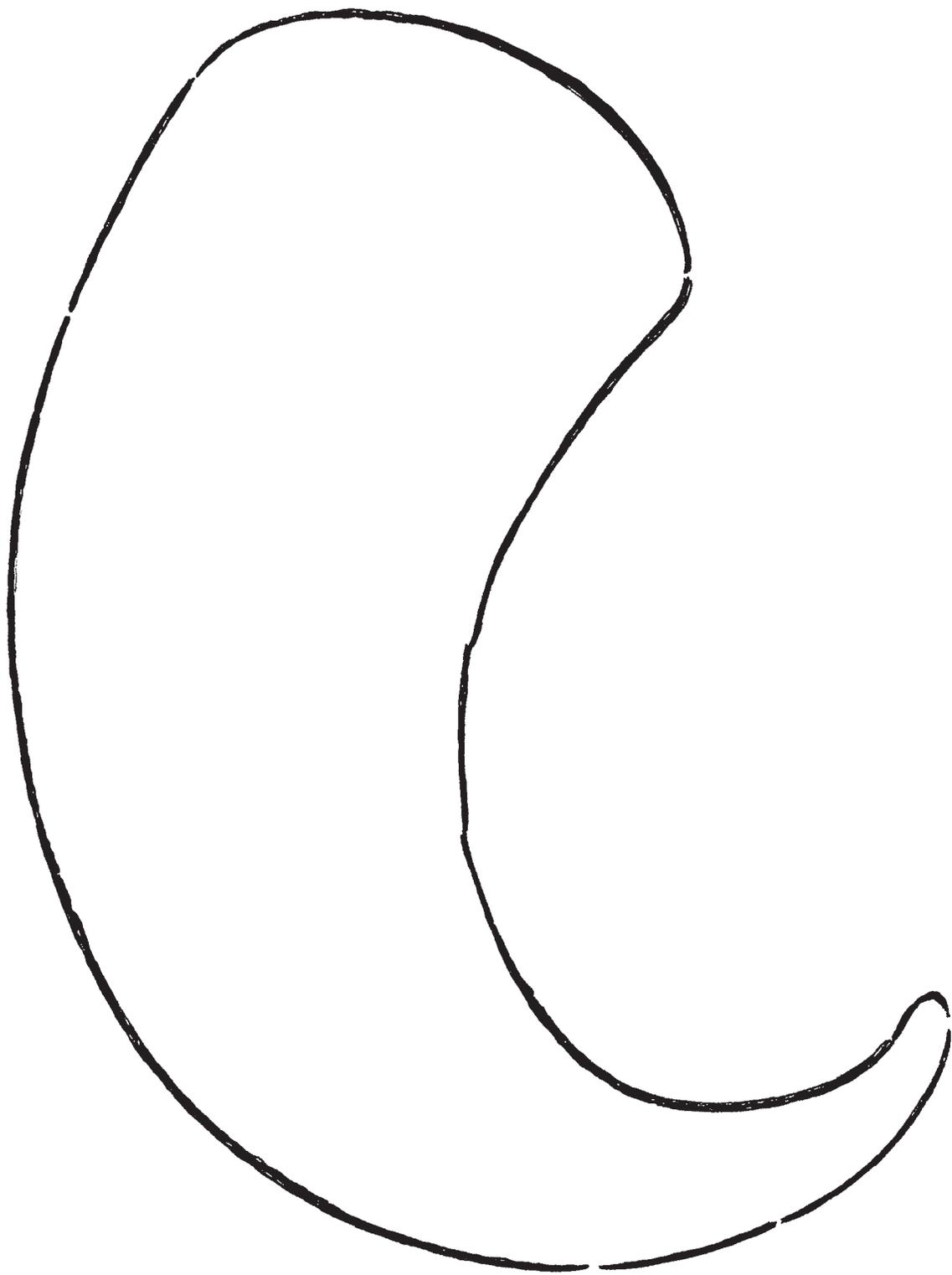
Narrator: With great sorrow, David realizes he has done a very wicked thing.

David: I have sinned. I've sinned against the Lord.

Nathan: The Lord has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However, because of this deed, your child will die.

Narrator: David and Bathsheba love their little son very much. But the Lord sends a sickness upon the little boy. David prays that the baby will get well. David doesn't eat. He spends every night on the ground, crying to the Lord, begging that the baby will live. Seven days later, the baby dies. David is very sad, but he still trusts God.

Nathan also tells David that evil will rise up against him from within his own family.



Hushai's Story

Hello, children. My name is Hushai. I may look like an old man to you. But I think these wrinkles on my face are more from worry than from age. Do you ever get anxious or worried about things? Have you ever felt like the world around you is out of control? Well, believe me, I know what that's like. The story I'm about to tell you has helped me learn what to do with worries like that. Listen closely and maybe my story will help you handle your worries.

I work in the palace as an advisor to King David. Not only is he my boss, he is also my friend. I have served King David for many years, and I can tell you that he truly is a man after God's own heart. That's why it was so hard to understand how anyone could threaten David and plan to take over his throne. And it wasn't a foreign ruler or an advancing army, either. It was David's own son, Absalom.

Handsome and full of charm, Absalom gained a fan club when he sat outside the city gates schmoozing with every man who entered the city. One day he asked his father for permission to go to Hebron to offer a sacrifice. When David granted permission, Absalom started a rebellion and began his attempt to dethrone his father so that he could be king instead. His spies told the people that on a certain day, when trumpets blew long and loud, they should all shout, "Absalom is king in Hebron!" Two hundred men from Jerusalem went along to help him. Traitors! Two hundred good-for-nothing traitors is what they were!

Things didn't look so good for King David. In fact, when David heard what his son was doing, he decided that he and his officials should run away before Absalom and his followers returned to overtake the city. I was horrified by the way Absalom treated his father. Sons are supposed to honor their fathers. How dare Absalom plan to steal his father's throne?

But David reminded me of his own sins—how he murdered Uriah in order to marry his wife. At that time the Lord warned David that a great punishment would come upon him for that terrible sin. And now, perhaps, it had come. David was acting as if he deserved all of this. He and his friends left Jerusalem, crying and mourning as if in a funeral procession.

I was scared. What would happen to our beloved city? How could God's blessings be with us under a king who set up his own authority? And what would become of me? I would rather die than submit to that disloyal traitor, Absalom. I felt my only choice was to leave, so I ran to the Mount of Olives, where I waited at the summit for David and the others. I thought David would be happy to see me. How surprised I was when he asked me to go back into the city and spy on Absalom. Inside I screamed No! He wanted me to pretend to be Absalom's friend. How could I play that role when I despised Absalom?

But for David's sake I did return to the palace. And I found that Absalom and his men had arrived in Jerusalem and were plotting to kill David. I faked loyalty to Absalom by saying things like, Long live King Absalom! Absalom planned to take twelve thousand men with him that very night to search for David and kill him. Before doing so he came to me for advice. Aha! Here was my chance to stop Absalom, and I knew the approach that would work the best—flattery! Absalom loves to be told how great he is.

I told him not to send out the men because his father was a fierce fighter and those with him were brave. Instead I urged Absalom to wait until his army grew great enough to go up against his father. I described how we would attack David wherever we found him. Neither he nor any of his men would be left alive. Even if David hid inside a city, all Israel would bring ropes to that city, and we would drag it down to the valley until not even a piece of it could be found! I told Absalom this so that David would have more time to get away. Well, Absalom was pretty fired up about leading such a pursuit!

When I knew that he had taken my advice, I went to the priests in Jerusalem who were David's friends. I told them to send the message quickly to David and to hurry across the Jordan River before Absalom's army could get there. That gave David time to gather an army of his own with Joab as one of the commanders. But even as David's army marched out to battle, David asked Joab and the other commanders to be gentle with Absalom.

The battle was ugly. David and his men defeated Absalom's army, and in the process twenty thousand men were killed. And what happened to Absalom? When he rode his mule under the branches of a great oak tree, Absalom's thick hair got caught in the branches. The mule went on and left him dangling with his feet above the ground.

Joab saw Absalom hanging there and quickly killed him. When David found out, his heart broke and he cried for his son. Can you imagine? He cried for the very son who tried to kill him and steal his throne!

When the people in Jerusalem learned that Absalom was dead, they invited David to return and be their king again. I learned then what I should have remembered the whole time: God was in control. God had promised that a Savior would come from David's line. And God would make sure that promise came true.

That's right. God is in control—no matter what.