

DAVID: A MAN OF PASSION AND DESTINY

STUDY SEVEN

For Cave Dwellers Only

1 Samuel 22:1–2; Selected Psalms

When the sovereign God brings us to nothing, it is to reroute our lives, not to end them.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

YOU may not notice it, but many people around you are living in caves. No, not *literal* caves. On the outside, these people's lives may look picture-perfect, but inside, their souls have retreated to a cave—an often dark, dismal, depressing, and disillusioning place.

When the world around someone seems to be crumbling, the natural human tendency is to run and hide—to seek shelter from the dangers, the fears, the worries, and the hurts of life. While a cave may provide *temporary* respite from the falling debris, such a refuge can become a prison to the one who refuses to leave its guarded walls.

Even David, a man after God's own heart, ran and hid in a cave when his burdensome circumstances threatened to crush him. This *Searching the Scriptures* study will examine David's thoughts and feelings while he was dwelling in the cave to see how God both shaped David and prepared him for what would come after the cave.

God wants to do the same things with those who still dwell in caves today.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

When David spent his days seeking shelter in a cave, he wrote several psalms. Confess your need for God by offering the words of *Psalms 142:1–4* in preparation for your study of God's Word today:

*I cry out to the LORD;
I plead for the LORD's mercy.
I pour out my complaints before him
and tell him all my troubles.
When I am overwhelmed,
you alone know the way I should turn.
Wherever I go,
my enemies have set traps for me.
I look for someone to come and help me,
but no one gives me a passing thought!
No one will help me;
no one cares a bit what happens to me.*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

With each success in the arena of battle and in the political arena, David looked more and more like a king. Once King Saul realized that David posed a threat to the throne, Saul committed himself to a singular goal . . .

To kill David.

Amid Saul's pursuit, David ran for his life, giving up everything to stay alive. He forfeited his rewarding job in Saul's court. He left behind his wife, his mentor, and his best friend. When it seemed like he had lost all hope, David gave up even his own dignity to hide among his enemies, the Philistines. With all his crutches removed, all David had to lean upon was God.



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According to *1 Samuel 22:1*, what did David do after hiding among the Philistines in Gath?

According to *22:2*, others joined David during this time. What were their reasons for siding with Israel's rejected hero?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



When David's morale sunk as low as it possibly could go, he became a refuge to those like him who had been chewed up, spat out, and left behind by society. While David and these other vagabonds found community in the haven of that cold, dark cave, David composed several psalms to God—songs dripping with earnest cries for help and heartfelt refrains of hope.

This study will look at three of these psalms: Psalms 142, 57, and 34. The following charts will guide you through observation and interpretation of each psalm individually. Then, the rest of the study will continue with correlation and application according to the method laid out in Pastor Chuck Swindoll's book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*.¹



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David Admits His Need Psalm 142:1–7	
Careful students of the Bible always read a psalm’s <i>superscript</i> . This brief note often provides an interpretive key that clues the readers in to the psalm’s context, which is essential to unlocking its meaning. Read the superscript of <i>Psalm 142</i> and write down the context of its composition:	
 Observation	 Interpretation
According to <i>142:1–4</i> , how did David describe his circumstances? How does knowing the context of the psalm provide clarity to these descriptions?	The superscript calls this psalm a <i>maskil</i> , a title which comes from the verb meaning “to instruct.” What is the main lesson David was teaching through this psalm?
According to <i>142:5–6</i> , how did David respond to his circumstances?	This psalm ends abruptly, with little resolution. Why do you think David wrote it this way?

This was the lowest moment of David’s life to date. He had no security. He had no food. He had no one to talk to. He had no promise to cling to. He had no hope that anything would ever change. He was alone in a dark cave, away from everything and everybody he loved. Everybody except God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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David Cries for Help Psalm 57:1–11	
Although Psalm 142 captures a snapshot of David at one of his lowest moments, he did not sulk in his cave forever. Rather, he recalled God’s promises to him, and his adversity drove him to his knees in prayer. In <i>Psalm 57</i> , David prayed earnestly and came to see that God—not the cave—was his <i>true</i> “protection” (57:1).	
 Observation	 Interpretation
What did David say he would do in <i>57:9–11</i> , despite the bleak outlook described in <i>57:4, 6</i> ?	What does David’s call in <i>57:2–3</i> reveal about his faith in God? (Note the verb tenses!)
Read <i>57:5</i> , then <i>57:11</i> . What stands out to you most about these two verses?	According to <i>57:5, 11</i> , what was David’s deepest desire amid his conflict with Saul?



David was saying, “Now You be gracious to me, God. I’m stretched—pulled beyond my limits. But You meet my needs.” He’s crying out his declaration of dependence.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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David Humbly Receives God’s Goodness
Psalm 34:1–22

David wrote many of his psalms both *to* God and *for* the people of Israel. And he wrote *Psalm 34* for a very specific group of people—those who were “in trouble or in debt or were just discontented” (1 Samuel 22:2). As you read, imagine yourself seeking refuge in the cave among the ranks of those 400 people who had also lost all their crutches and all their hope.

 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>What lesson did David hope his readers would learn through this psalm (see 34:11–14)?</p> <p>What words of encouragement did David offer in this psalm to those facing terrible situations?</p>	<p>How would the refugees in the cave have received David’s words in 34:15–20?</p> <p>How did David’s tone and attitude change from Psalm 142 to Psalm 57 to Psalm 34?</p>

We don’t know in what order David wrote these psalms, but looking at his life, they seem to fit in this backward order: Psalm 142 when he’s at his lowest moment on his face, Psalm 57 when he’s on his knees, and finally Psalm 34 when he’s on his feet. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: The Perfect Refuge

David found his true refuge not in the dark recesses of the cave but in the caring embrace of his God. Nearly one thousand years later, Jesus offered the same haven in Himself.

Read *Matthew 11:28–30*. Whom did Jesus address in *11:28*? What caring message did He offer them?

What two traits did Jesus use to describe himself in *11:29*?

1. _____
2. _____

Those desperate for shelter today need only to hide in Jesus, the ever-present help and eternal hope. This hope is available right now to any who would take hold of it.



Application: How David Changed

The cave of Adullam became not a prison but a sanctuary where David could connect with God. He entered the cave helpless but emerged hopeful. How did such a profound change come over David? Pastor Chuck offers three explanations. David was . . .

1. *Hurt enough to admit his need.* God slowly took away each of David's crutches. When the pain was so great from all he had lost, David didn't give up. He turned to God.
2. *Honest enough to cry for help.* There was no pretending or posturing with David. He directly addressed his needs to God and sought His help.
3. *Humble enough to learn from God.* David used his time of trial to learn and to grow.



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THE
SCRIPTURES

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Do you ever find yourself among the cave dwellers? Where do you tend to hide or seek refuge? What enemies usually drive you there?

What would it look like for you to leave your cave behind and take refuge in the rest Christ offers? Perhaps God is calling you to adopt one of the characteristics David showed during his cave-dwelling experience.

When David had nowhere else to turn, he hid in a cave. God, however, used this season to strengthen David and to remind him of His faithfulness. You might feel like David today—as if the cave you're hiding in is your only shelter from the threats and harms of this world. Join David. Step out of your cave in faith and find comfort in the light—the light of God's mercy and grace.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for those times You brought me out of the darkest moments of my life. I ask You to show me the caves where I tend to hide so I can trust You to bring me out with Your guiding hand. Help me to find refuge in the shelter of Your wings only. I pray these things in Jesus' safe and secure name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

