Lessons Learned in a Cave  
I Sam. 22:1-5

David, the man after God's own heart and the man God anointed King of Israel, is on the run – not because of any crimes he has committed; in fact, he had not even been accused of committing a crime. He's not running because of any moral failure or because he has harmed anyone. He is on the run because of the insane jealousy of King Saul. Saul was the King of Israel, but he has already disqualified himself and God has already rejected him. God has already anointed David and filled him with the Holy Spirit and was preparing him to be the next King on the throne of Israel.

David has almost hit bottom and he is afraid. Fear makes us do strange things. Fear often causes us to lean on our own understanding. Fear often causes us to lose sight of God and step out of fellowship with him. Fear often makes us cowards. I think of Peter when he followed Jesus afar off and then began to warm his hands at the enemy's fire. It was not long until he was denying the Lord – three times.

A miracle allows David to escape from the prison in Gath and goes to the cave of Adullam. The Cave of Adullam is only about ten miles from Bethlehem, David's home town. It is located in the Valley of Elah in the vicinity where David killed Goliath. David escapes from Gath to the Cave of Adullam and God is going to do something in his life that will change the direction of his life forever.

Let's learn some lessons as we go into the Cave of Adullam with David:


A. His Family at the Cave – 22:1

God is preparing David for the throne. Whatever God calls us to do, He prepares us to do. This cave is going to be David's Spiritual Seminary. It is going to be David's Spiritual Bootcamp. If you join the army so you can go and fight your country's enemy, you do not join up and go immediately to the battlefield. You go to bootcamp first. There you are trained; you get physically and emotionally fit; you are instructed in a specific kind of warfare. You learn how to use weapons and how to follow orders.

We don't know exactly how long David was in that cave, but when he first got to the cave he just wanted to be safe and protected from Saul. He was hiding. He didn't want anyone to know where he was. He wanted to be alone; to get away from everyone.

-As he sat in that cave, David had plenty of time to think about his walk with God. And like the Prodigal son, “he came to himself.”

After a short time, his family came to him and later 400 more came to be with him. Who told? How did the word get out? David told! He was no longer trusting in his own ability; now he was trusting in God.

David's family joined David at the cave for two reasons:
(1) Support

What an encouragement to have his family with him and behind him. At the beginning the brothers were jealous of him. He had been anointed as king instead of them. But those hard feelings have vanished and they seek David out in the cave.

(2) Safety

Saul not only wanted to kill David, he wanted to kill David's family as well.

- Add to that the fact that his brothers had been in Saul's army. They had to desert Saul's army to join David and desertion meant death.

Notice 22:3-4 What great example of honoring one's parents

- 1 Tim. 5:8 says that if one does not provide for his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.

- David knew his elderly parents could not hold up to the rough cave life, so he took them to Mizpeh of Moab

- Why Moab? As you study the Book of Ruth, you learn that Ruth was the grandmother of David's father, Jesse. There were some strong ties there and David got the King of Moab to personally care for his parents.

B. His Followers at the Cave – 22:2

What an incompetent group of folks. These were all the malcontents in Israel. King Saul had most likely levied a heavy tax on the people of Israel and now these 400 go to join David.

Again, this is going to be a boot camp for David. Dealing with these 400, which are going to grow to 600, he is going to learn how to rule over the twelve separate tribes of Israel. He is also going to learn how to train an army, and these men will become the best army in the history of Israel.

- God is preparing David for his future. God deliberately sends these types of folks for David to work with and deal with and train.

What kind of folks were they?

(1) They were the Distressed

They were under pressure and stress. They all had troubles of one kind or another, probably with Saul and in just making it in their daily lives.

(2) They were in Debt

They had too many credit cards. It was illegal for a Jew to charge another Jew interest, but the implication is that King Saul was lending them money with high interest rates. The people could not handle their monies and Saul thought that would ensure that they would be loyal to him since they owed him. Instead, these just skipped out on their debts.

(3) They were Discontent

They were deeply resentful, bitter, and hostile because they had been wronged and mistreated by King Saul. David rallied these men to his side.

C. His Faith in the Cave

What did he do while he was in that cave? We would not know if God had not lead him to record what he did and how he felt while he was in the cave.

- Three Psalms were written by David that gives us key insights into the life of David while in the cave:
Ps. 142, 57, 34

(1) In Ps. 142 David is on his Face
(2) In Ps. 57 David is on his Knees
(3) In Ps. 34 David is on his Feet

Part of the maturing process in the life of any Christian is learning how to cope with the dark, dreary, depressing and discouraging times in our life. Those times when we may have faltered, failed, or been foolish.

In Ps. 142, we are able to see the condition of David's soul:

(1) He was Disoriented – 142:3

- “My spirit was overwhelmed within me” The word means “in the muffling of my spirit.”
- David's spirit was devastated. The pile of heavy trials are crushing in on him. He is overwhelmed by fear and he felt helpless.
- He was hunted by King Saul and his men. The enemy had secretly set a trap for him (142:3). He was surrounded by 400 hurting men who were burdened with problems themselves and who were hoping that David could help them. He was burdened with guilt because he felt responsible and guilty over the unintentional deaths of everyone at Nob – 85 priest and their families. We are told that he was “brought very low” and he felt so weak. He was ready to give up! You can almost imagine him sitting in a cave, his face resting in his upturned hands, with despair in his soul.
- We've all felt overwhelmed by our problems and with what's expected of us.

(2) He felt Deserted – 142:4

- David had been the darling of the nation just a few years earlier, but now he felt all alone.
- His feelings were not an accurate assessment of the truth. Many people cared for David, but because they were not in his presence, he felt forsaken. Sometimes when we are in a “cave experience”, we cannot accurately sort out our feelings. Feelings can be a little like our laundry. Sometimes, we can't sort them until we dump them out.
- The great truth is that when the believer is alone, he is never alone. He may be isolated from people, but he is never isolated from God. He may live by himself, but he is never unaccompanied. The Lord is always with the believer. What a wonderful source of strength and comfort!

(3) He felt Depressed – 142:6

David felt like giving up. But, he did not stay in that low spot.
- But something happened in that cave that changed David's whole perspective. What was it? What did he so? HE PRAYED! He did what James tells us all to do: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). He began to commune with God!

a. He Cried Aloud – 142:1

It is a prayer from a man who has come to the end of his rope. He found himself running not only from man, but from God Himself!
- This scene touches my heart as I imagine this young man sobbing in that cave. Caves make good prayer closets.
- I wonder how much he wished for the old days when he was unimportant and content as he kept his sheep. He had not asked God to anoint him and, yet, he has had nothing but trouble since that day.
- I believe “crying aloud” helped David – emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Sometimes there's nothing like a good cry. It clears the air, doesn't it? David was a real man by anyone's standards, yet the best outlet for him was to cry aloud to his God. When you feel overwhelmed, cry aloud to the Lord! He can take it!
Well, what did he pray for? What did he cry aloud for?
-Ps 57:1 tells us: he cries out for mercy. Twice in Ps.57:1 he says, “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful to me: for my soul trusteth in thee.”

b. He poured out his complaints to God – 142:2
Have you ever done that? Have you ever been honest enough with God that you poured out your complaints to him?
-It's amazing how many times we think God doesn't know what we have in our hearts. One day a drunk came into a pastor's office and the secretary immediately showed the drunk into the pastor's office. The pastor asked the man what he wanted. The drunk said, “I want you to pray for me.” The pastor grabbed the drunk by the shoulder and pulled him right down to the floor. He started his prayer, “God, I ask you to help this old drunk...” And the drunk said, “Shhhhh, don't tell Him I'm drunk”, as though God didn't already know.

David poured out his complaint before the Lord and declared to Him all his trouble.
-Ps.57 – David faced “calamities” (v.1), “reproach” (v.3), an enemy that could “swollow me up” (v.3), being “among lions...whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword” (v.4), having an enemy that “prepared a net (trap) for my steps” (v.6), and who “digged a pit (a booby trap) before me” (v.6).

Ps. 142:3,6 he was “overwhelmed,” the enemy had “laid a snare (trap) for me”, he was “brought very low”, he was persecuted, he felt weak. And no one seemed to care.

c. He rehearsed his trust in God and offers Him his praise – Ps. 142:5,7
-David moves from Problems to Praise -Ps. 57 His praise involved music about the Lord (v.7-9), mercy from the Lord (v.10), and magnifying the Lord (v.11).

II. The Counsel From His Prophet

Gad begins a long career as prophet with David. In fact, he and two other prophets, Samuel and Nathan, write David's biography.
-Gad instructs David to leave the cave of safety and go back to Judah, to the very place King Saul is waiting.
-Why? How will David ever learn to trust God with all his heart if he is safe in his cave? God is calling David to be a man of faith and trust in God.

Let me give you some lessons David learned in his cave:

1. David learned that even when he was not faithful to God, God remained faithful to him.
2. When God is all you have, He's all you need.
3. God is sufficient in every situation.
4. God is greater than any enemy we may face.
5. You can trust God no matter how dark things may get.