



SURVIVING TOXIC PEOPLE Navigating Toxic Times

Having defeated Goliath, David must now survive a toxic King Saul and overcome poisonous times much like our own. Hidden in his struggles are secrets that will help us detox in these polarizing days.

NOTES: **I SAMUEL 18 ff.**

Saul was a big man with a little heart. He fit the profile of a toxic person, and produced a noxious environment in his family, personal relationships and kingdom. Maybe you find yourself in a toxic relationship, job or home. Certainly, our society is now experiencing heightened toxicity—not unlike the turbulence of David's youth. How do we recognize toxic people? Here are some telltale signs that surely marked the life of Saul:

- Toxic People **spread negativity**
- Toxic people **constantly criticize others.**
- Toxic people **play mind games.**
- Toxic people **are manipulative and controlling.**
- Toxic people **always have to win.**
- Toxic people **are self-serving and selfish.**
- Toxic people **are dishonest and deceptive.**

Toxic people **love drama.**
Toxic people **expect blind loyalty, but are not loyal.**
Toxic people **are never satisfied, no matter how hard you try.**
Toxic people **lack healthy boundaries.**
Toxic people **are possessive and jealous.**
Toxic people **are punitive when they don't get their way.**
Toxic people **are bullies.**
Toxic people **expect preferential treatment.**
Toxic people **have an entitlement mentality.**
Toxic people **are envious and jealous.**
Toxic people **suck you dry and then look for other victims.**

A song by the pop group Blondie has these lyrics about toxic people like King Saul: "Some people create their own storms, then get upset when it rains."

How Do You Respond to Toxic People or Toxic Times?

Most of today's experts have a single, quick solution: **Get out of all toxic relationships as soon as you recognize them. A favorite saying is this: "You can't change people around you, but you can choose to change the people you choose to be around."**

That's easier said than done. As Christians, we believe that we must hang in toxic marriages, be submissive to toxic authorities, take the gospel to toxic people, and give our best shot at redeeming toxic relationships. We also believe that God sometimes calls us to remain in toxic situations for our good and his glory. The Great Commission is never a safe proposition. So, short of putting on a gas mask or insulating ourselves in perpetual lockdowns, how do we survive toxic people and navigate toxic times? Here are some principles from David's story:

1. Remember: **God is in sovereign control—all the time and in every situation.** No situation is by accident or senseless.
[I Samuel 16:14]
2. Understand the true nature of friendship and the fragility of loyalty. Hold on to all relationships loosely, but **cling tenaciously to God's friendship—and treasure those few true friends that God gives you.** [I Samuel 16:18-23 & 18:5]
3. Never forget: **with success come enemies.** Jealousy, envy, and self-preservation are inescapable. [I Samuel 18:6-8]
4. Distrust is inevitable. People will judge your motives according to their own flawed perceptions. You have to own other people's perceptions, but not their misconceptions. **Stay the course in spite of unfair criticisms.** [I Samuel 18:9-16]
5. Toxic people will set you up for failure. God will always thwart their schemes and assure your ultimate victory. **Put your trust in Him, not others.** [I Samuel 18:12-20]
6. Toxic people and cultures try to divide and conquer. **But God always has an escape for those who don't respond in kind, but wait patiently for his help.** [I Samuel 19]
7. God may call you to remain in toxic times and with toxic people for a season, but **you must find a cohort of faithful friends who will sustain you.** [I Samuel 20]
8. Sometimes, we have no choice but to leave toxic situations and relationships. **Nevertheless, we must know that it is God who has called us to do so. We can never disobey**

God's Word as an excuse for seeking personal safety or happiness. [I Samuel 21]

9. We can't take personal responsibility for the actions of toxic people. Often, they manipulate us with guilt, blaming us for "making" them abuse us or others because we didn't acquiesce to their demands. **Each person stands before God, and is accountable for his or her own actions. [I Samuel 22]**

10. No matter how dangerous it gets in our toxic times, **we must not lose hope in God's protection of his people.** The times of our lives are always in his hands. [I Samuel 23]

11. We must never take matters into our own hands. **We cannot touch the Lord's anointed nor tear down his order to gain our ends.** He alone puts kings in place, and brings princes down into the dust. Again, we need to rest in his sovereignty. [I Samuel 24 & 26]

12. Sometimes God colors outside the box. **While his Word has clear principles, sometimes his Spirit calls us to do the unthinkable. [I Samuel 25]**