

# **A Tale of Three Kings Study Guide**

## **A Tale of Three Kings by Gene Edwards**

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# Plot Summary

A Tale of Three Kings by Gene Edwards is a cautionary tale written in a time of turmoil in the Christian community. Many Christians found their faith shaken when many religious leaders were proven to be someone other than who they portrayed themselves to be. Gene Edwards fictionalizes several stories from the Bible in order to guide these lost Christians and help them find their way back to their faith. A Tale of Three Kings is not only a cautionary tale, but hope presented in a modern retelling of favorite stories.

David is the young son of a shepherd, destined to be just like his father and his brothers before him. However, David's life takes a new turn when an old King visits his family and announces that David will one day be a great king himself. David's life continues to change when he saves a sheep from a bear with a well thrown rock and later does the same with a giant who has been terrorizing a community. Instead of reveling in the newfound fame this act gives David, he finds himself the target of anger and abuse when he goes to live in a palace with a mad king.

Saul, the king, is jealous of David's youth and clearly bright future. Saul hurts David in every way he can in order to break his spirit. However, David does not react to this poor treatment the way everyone expects him to. David ignores the abuse and refuses to return it. David only acts when he learns that King Saul has ordered him to be killed. David then runs away and hides alone in caves around the region while dogs and soldiers hunt him. Soon others begin to join David, including thieves and criminals who also suffered at the hands of King Saul. David becomes their reluctant leader.

Many years later, David is now king. David has fought many battles for his kingdom and led his people into peace and prosperity. However, now David's son, Absalom, sees fault in his father's leadership and wants to take over. Absalom believes he knows better how to run the kingdom. David learns of Absalom's plans and to the astonishment of those around him, chooses not to do anything about it. David believes that Absalom is God's chosen replacement for David. David walks away from his kingdom without a fight, allowing God to do as he believes to be the right thing for the kingdom.

# Prologue

## Prologue Summary

A Tale of Three Kings by Gene Edwards is a cautionary tale written in a time of turmoil in the Christian community. Many Christians found their faith shaken when many religious leaders were proven to be someone other than who they portrayed themselves to be. Gene Edwards fictionalizes several stories from the Bible in order to guide these lost Christians and help them find their way back to their faith. A Tale of Three Kings is not only a cautionary tale, but hope presented in a modern retelling of favorite stories.

God orders Gabriel to give two pieces of Himself to two unborn destinies. To the first Gabriel is to give the cloth of God, surrounding the destiny in God's power. This gift gives the bearer the power to crush armies and shame the enemies of God, but will be external. This gift will never touch the inner being. To the second Gabriel is to give a seed to be planted in the inner being. This seed will grow when mixed with pain, sorrow and crushing. In time this seed will fill the person's entire inner being. Both these gifts are to be given to men that are one day to be kings.

## Prologue Analysis

Gabriel is an angel in heaven. God commands Gabriel to give two essences of himself to two unborn destinies. One is the cloth of God, his power wrapped around the outside of the person to whom this destiny will belong. This cloth will give the person the power to crush armies and God's enemies, but it will not touch the person's inner soul, his inner person. The second is a seed to grow inside the person, to grow and take up this person's inner soul. Both these destinies will go to men who will one day be kings.

This prologue introduces two different types of people. The first is one who accepts God on the outside, but not in his inner soul. The second person takes God into his very soul, allowing God to use him as an empty vessel of sorts. Now the reader is left wondering who these two people will be within the story. The reader is prepared to believe these two people will be major characters within the novel. This prologue also touches on the theme of spirituality as the prologue includes two characters from the Bible, God and the angel, Gabriel. This theme touched upon in the prologue sets the tone of the novel and allows the reader to understand the intention of the novel.

# Part One, Chapters 1-2

## Part One, Chapters 1-2 Summary

In a town called Bethlehem there is a shepherd, Jesse, who has eight sons. The oldest have jobs on the farm. The youngest, David, goes into the hills to watch over the family sheep. David always takes with him a sling and a musical instrument. During the long hours of watching the sheep, David often plays music and practices throwing rocks with his sling, targeting a small tree nearby. One day a bear comes upon the sheep and attempts to steal a small vulnerable lamb. David kills this bear with a rock and afterward David is more mature than before. That night David composes a song about the event. The song will someday come to inspire many men and women.

Some time later David is called home. There is an old man at the house who has asked to see David. This man has David kneel before him. The old man can see that David has a big heart and that he loves God. The man anoints David's head with oil and announces that he has been anointed by God. The old man continues to say that David will some day become a great king. The reader might believe that David's life would be easy from this time on, but instead David lives a difficult life. David is promoted from shepherd to messenger, taking messages to and from his brothers during a war. During this time David kills a giant named Goliath and becomes a folk hero.

## Part One, Chapters 1-2 Analysis

The reader is introduced to David, a young man who spends his days watching his father's sheep. The boy likes music and teaches himself how to throw rocks with a sling. One day his skills come in handy when he saves a lamb from a bear. The reader sees from this event that David is a brave young man. David is also an accomplished composer who writes a song about this event that the writer says will inspire people for many years. The writer makes this comment within the narration, using what is called the authorial voice.

Later David is called home where he is anointed by an old King. This King tells David and his family that he is one of God's anointed and will someday be a king. The writer, again using the authorial voice, offers the comment that one would think David would have an easy life from that point on. However, David's life is hard and difficult, including his becoming a messenger for his brothers while they fight on the front lines of a war. David also has occasion to kill a giant during this time, but this is glossed over by the writer, suggesting it has little to do with the following story even though it is something about David that most modern readers are well acquainted with.

# Part One, Chapters 3-7

## Part One, Chapters 3-7 Summary

David goes to live in a palace with a king. This king is mad. Even though David sings to the king often and his music pleases all who hear it, the king is not pleased. King Saul sees David as a threat to his kingdom. Saul believes that David wants to steal his own kingdom. Saul throws spears at David because of his anger and jealousy. Saul is also anointed by God, but this does not mean that he acts as God might have him act. Saul is powerful, has crushed many armies in God's name, but God has not touched his inner soul, allowing him to feel jealousy toward David.

David does not know what to do when someone is cruel to him. When Saul throws spears at him, David does not know how to respond. David is told to throw spears of his own at Saul or at least throw back the spears that Saul throws. However, David refuses to do this. David does not want to hurt Saul. David chooses to ignore the spears and to stay out of Saul's way as much as possible. This surprises the people around David who believe he is allowing Saul to abuse him.

## Part One, Chapters 3-7 Analysis

David goes to live with a king who is deeply jealous of David. King Saul believes David has come to steal away his kingdom. David has no plans or desire to do this, but Saul will not believe it. Saul is anointed by God, but he is the one described in the prologue as receiving God's gift of cloth. Saul has God's power, but it is external and never touches his inner person. Therefore, Saul does not allow God inside to guide him and this allows his jealousy to grow. This situation begins the example of the theme being a Saul. Saul is a type of leader that the writer is attempting to warn the reader about and using as an example of the type of leader to avoid following blindly.

Saul is jealous, so he begins throwing spears at David. These spears are symbolic of the cruelty one human being can heap on another, often with simple words. David does not know what to do as Saul does this. David has God inside of himself and knows it would not be good to return Saul's cruelty. David ignores the cruelty rather than return it as those around him advise him to do. David reacts the way he believes God would want him to.

# **Part One, Chapters 8-14**

## **Part One, Chapters 8-14 Summary**

The writer pauses in the narration to explain the differences between Saul and David. The writer wants the reader to be able to recognize a Saul in their own lives and avoid these leaders. Sauls are people who do not have God in their hearts and therefore could lead their flock astray. David, on the other hand, has God in his soul and will not lead his followers astray, even if there are times when he does not know what to do. The writer acknowledges that the reader might not know how to tell the difference between a Saul and a David on first glance, but assures the reader that if they have God in their hearts, the difference will someday be clear.

David learns that Saul wants him killed. Now David runs away from Saul's cruelty. David flees to the caves in the hills around Saul's kingdom, hiding from his soldiers and dogs. It is a lonely life, but David uses his sorrow and loneliness to write music and to pray, bringing him closer to God. In the villages, David becomes less of a folk hero and more of a cautionary tale. However, soon he is joined by criminals who were also fleeing Saul and his soldiers. David becomes a leader of these men despite their fear of authority. However, when David has a chance to fight Saul and chooses not to, these men question his decision. David quietly explains that it is not his right to kill one of God's anointed no matter what he has become.

## **Part One, Chapters 8-14 Analysis**

The writer once again uses the authorial voice in these next two chapters in order to discuss the differences between Saul and David. Saul is the man who has been wrapped in God's power. This power is enormous, but remains an external power. Saul never has God in his inner person or in his heart. This causes Saul to make decisions that can be misleading and dishonorable. However, David does have God inside of him. The more pain and suffering David faces the more he opens himself to God. The writer warns his readers to beware of following men like Saul and to watch for men like David. However, the writer cannot tell the reader how to recognize one from the other, expressing the belief that only God can do this.

David finally runs from Saul when he learns that Saul wants to have him murdered. David flees to the caves in the area, hiding out in darkness. This seems like a sad situation, but David finds grace in these places and uses the time to write music and to open himself further to God. Despite falling from his hero status, David somehow finds himself leading a group of men who are mostly criminals. David does not want to be their leader, but they follow him anyway because they know he is anointed by God. Later when David has a chance to kill Saul, he refuses to take it. The men who follow him question this choice and David tells them that Saul is anointed by God as well and only God can defeat him.

# Part One, Chapters 15-18

## Part One, Chapters 15-18 Summary

Before he was a mad king, Saul was a young man from a good family. Saul founded a kingdom and defended it from those who would try to take it away. Saul is a good king, a strong leader anointed by God. However, Saul wears his power on the outside, never taking God into his heart. Even as Saul prays to God, he feels empty inside. The reader might wonder why then he is anointed by God. God gives these people power so that others might see their emptiness and be aware of the differences in men.

One day a young man in the army of David's grandson asks an old retired soldier what it was like to serve under David. The soldier tells him that David ruled by submission rather than authority. David was a good leader, a man who did not force rules and laws upon his people. This description leaves the young soldier unhappy in his current leadership even though he had been quite happy with his king before. The writer uses this story as an example of the differences between a Saul and a David, showing the reader how sometimes it can be difficult to see the differences but it is important to see them so that the reader does not follow the wrong type of leader.

## Part One, Chapters 15-18 Analysis

The writer gives the reader insight into Saul. Saul is not the mad person the reader sees with David, at least he has not always been mad. However, Saul has never allowed God into his heart. Saul has always felt empty when he prays. This gives the reader a clear example of Saul as the man who received as destiny the power of God that would never touch his inner person. Despite having been anointed by God and having a great family history, Saul is still an empty person who does not know God inside his heart. The writer warns his readers, illustrating the theme of being a Saul, not to follow such a leader.

The writer then presents a story about a young man who speaks to a soldier who once fought under David. This young man learns that David was a great and gracious king who led by submission rather than authority, giving his followers choices rather than laws and rules to follow. This shows the reader how different David was from Saul. Touching on the theme of being a David, the writer suggests to his readers that this is the type of leader they should not only attempt to follow, but is the type of person the reader should strive to be in his own personal story.



## **Part Two, Chapters 19-23**

### **Part Two, Chapters 19-23 Summary**

David is now the age Saul was when David came to know him. David is king now and has been a great king. However, David's son, Absalom, has become a popular leader among David's people and has come to believe he will be a better king than his father. Absalom speaks so often and so publicly of the failings of David's rule that people begin to believe his words and to spread anger over the injustices they see in David's rule. Absalom has a great deal of support and has decided that he would like to attempt to take the kingdom from his father rather than wait until he inherits it upon his father's death.

David learns that Absalom has been holding meetings among David's people, discussing his vision of the future. Absalom believes that the people should have more freedoms and has many plans for how he would rule should he be king. However, many of these ideas depend on the people's cooperation, something some people do not believe Absalom will be able to count on should he become king. Absalom is young and many of his ideas are naive. However, Absalom has a great deal of support among the people.

David hears about Absalom's plans. Many people come to warn him about Absalom's attempts to take his kingdom and expect him to fight his son. However, David says that he has always known Absalom would attempt this and that it is not his place to fight him. David believes that God gave him his kingdom and it is God's will that it be taken away now.

### **Part Two, Chapters 19-23 Analysis**

David has grown old and now has a grown son named Absalom. Absalom disagrees with the way David runs his kingdom and is vocal about changes he will make when he becomes king. Absalom's opinions are picked up by those around him and anger and unrest runs through the kingdom as people begin to agree with Absalom's ideas. Soon there is a call for Absalom to take over the kingdom. Absalom's ideas are naive and dangerous, but they are new and exciting as well. Absalom decides to attempt to take over the kingdom.

David learns of Absalom's plans and is not frightened, though he second guesses himself a little. David wants to allow Absalom to take over. At other times, David has always known what to do but this time he does not. This tells David that God wants for Absalom to take over the kingdom. David decides to stand back and allow it to happen even though his advisers do not agree.

## **Part Two, Chapters 24-27**

### **Part Two, Chapters 24-27 Summary**

Many of David's supporters question the merits of allowing Absalom to take over the kingdom. Many believe David should fight. These supporters fear that Absalom will be the same sort of king Saul was. However, David assures them that Absalom is not the same as Saul, nor is he like David. Absalom is a different sort of leader, one with the potential to be either a David or a Saul. Only time will tell.

An adviser comes to David and questions his decision. David asks him to tell the story of Moses and Korah. Korah causes discord in Moses's kingdom and raises a group of followers to move against Moses. Korah then goes to Moses and tells him that he wants to take over the kingdom. Moses tells him that God will make that decision. The next day Korah and his followers are swallowed by the earth. David says that that situation is much like this one. David is stepping back, much like Moses did, in order to allow God to make the decision. When Absalom is not swallowed by the earth, David assumes this means that Absalom is meant to take over the kingdom.

When the story has come to an end, David is informed that Absalom has declared himself king. Again David's supporters want him to raise an army against Absalom, but David again refuses. Instead, David walks away quietly without any fanfare or even the knowledge of the majority of his supporters.

### **Part Two, Chapters 24-27 Analysis**

There is a great deal of discussion over the type of leader Absalom will be. No one knows for sure. Absalom appears to be kind of heart until he decides to take over his father's kingdom. Absalom also appears to be naive and impractical. People are concerned that Absalom will be a leader like Saul. David tells them that he is not a Saul yet, nor is he a David, touching on both these themes. David says that time will tell the type of leader Absalom will be and that they should give him the time to develop.

David asks one of his most vocal supporters to relate the story of Moses and Korah. Moses was in the same position. Moses also stepped back and allowed God to make the decision. God chose to swallow Korah and his followers up into the earth. When this does not happen to Absalom, David is content to believe that God has intended for Absalom to become king. David does not want to go against his God. David decides to walk away from his kingdom. David leaves quietly, without the fanfare that might have followed him under other circumstances. This is how David prefers things, believing that God gave him all he had and that it was up to God to take it all away. This touches on the theme of spirituality. David believes in God and believes God has guided his movements his entire life. David sees no reason to fight that now.



# Characters

## David

David is the youngest son of a shepherd. David is given the job of watching over the sheep. This is a lonely job, but David passes the time by communing with the sheep and learning how to throw rocks. Soon this talent of throwing stones comes in handy when David uses it to save a sheep from a bear. Later, David will use his talent with stones to kill a giant named Goliath who has been tormenting the local village. David becomes a folk hero for this action, but does not like the attention it gives him.

As a child David is told he will someday be a great king. To train for this day, David is sent to live in the palace of a king. This king sees greatness in David and knows he will someday take his place. The king is mad and does not want to lose his kingdom to David. As a result, this mad king throws spears at David on a daily basis, making his life difficult. Eventually David learns that the mad king wants to kill him so he runs away.

When David runs away a great many of the kingdom's thieves and criminals follow. Soon they find David and make him their leader. David is not interested in being a king, but does not reject these followers. David believes that God has plans for him and he should keep himself open to this plan. This same attitude keeps David from fighting his own son for his kingdom more than twenty years later. David's advisers do not understand his attitude, but David believes that it is God's will that Absalom take over his kingdom and he should not fight him.

## Saul

Saul is the mad king with whom David goes to live. Saul is a decent king, but when David comes to live with him he begins to believe that David is after his kingdom. Saul becomes full of jealousy. Saul begins to harm David by throwing spears at him. Saul wants to stop David from becoming the good man that he can see he is going to be. However, David fails to allow Saul's cruel behavior to upset him. David allows the spears to fall away and he does not throw any of his own spears. This further annoys Saul who decides he wants David to be murdered. Saul sends men to kill David. When David learns this, he leaves Saul's kingdom. In doing so, David is followed by other people who have suffered under the mad king and thus becomes a king in his own right.

Saul is presented as a cautionary tale in this novel. Saul is presented as a leader who is often presented as a fair king until his true colors begin to show. Saul is also presented as a leader who fails to keep himself open to God. Saul never accepts the true pain of life on his own. Saul is always surrounded by others and always fights for what he believes is his, whether it is something God has intended for him to fight for or not. Saul is the type of leader the writer warns the reader to avoid. Saul is also the person the writer cautions his readers not to become themselves.



## Absalom

Absalom is David's son, a good, kind person who often has insight into problems. Absalom has gathered a large group of people around him who see the problems of David's kingdom in the same way as Absalom and believe Absalom should be king in David's place. Absalom listens to the opinions of his followers and soon comes to believe as they do, that he should be king. Absalom decides to lead a rebellion against his own father. Absalom wants to be king so that he can make positive changes for the kingdom, changes that David may be reluctant to do himself. David refuses to fight Absalom's take over despite the opinions of his advisers. David believes that God gave him his kingdom and that it is up to God to take it away, in the form of his son, Absalom.

## David's Followers

David's followers are not the perfect citizens they will one day become. David's followers are thieves and criminals who have been run out of Saul's kingdom much the same way David was. However, they are good people who need a good leader to show them the error of their ways and help them become better people. David is reluctant to take this role, but takes it because it seems to be the desire of God that he do. Many of these followers remain with David for many years, showing up at his side the day Absalom tries to steal his kingdom. If not for these followers, David would not have a kingdom and there would be nothing for Absalom to steal.

## Absalom's Followers

Absalom's followers are the citizens of David's kingdom. These people are the children and grandchildren of David's followers. These people see that David's kingdom needs changes in order to make it a better place to live. Absalom's followers listen to his descriptions of the changes he sees that need to be made and find that many of his solutions are better than their own. When it is suggested that Absalom take over the kingdom, it comes from one of these followers. Absalom likes what he hears and joins with his followers to make it happen. When Absalom's attempt to become king is found out by the citizens of David's kingdom, many of them join Absalom's cause, becoming part of his following and making the decision easier for him to make. It also shows David that perhaps this change is something that God wants and causes him to step back and allow it to happen.

## God

God is painted in this book as someone who likes to use broken people as his vessels or vehicles on earth. God uses David to lead his kingdom and to help his people move away from the selfish rule of Saul. God does not use Saul because Saul is not broken, he is simply misguided and ill-informed. David is broken by Saul and his spears as well as by the loneliness of his childhood and the behavior of the important people in his life,



such as his father and brothers. David turns to God in his loneliness and opens himself open to him, hoping to please him with his behaviors. God then uses David to create a kingdom that serves him well here on earth.

## The Shepherd

The shepherd has many children. David is his last child, therefore he is often forgotten. The shepherd is not a bad man, however; he is simply a busy man. The shepherd sends David out into the fields to watch over the sheep and keep them safe from predators. David learns a great deal of things during that time that will help him later in his life. One of the things David learns is how to throw rocks in order to protect the sheep. Another thing is how to keep himself open to God and to commune with animals. These things will serve David well later in his life. Later, when the shepherd learns that David is destined to be a good king, he is proud of his son. The shepherd does all he can to help David prepare for this future.

## The Old King

The Old King is a man who comes to visit David at his home. The Old King takes a look at David and decides that he is destined to become a great king. The Old King tells David and his family that he has a great future and he should prepare for it properly. David is surprised by this prophecy because he is the youngest son of a shepherd, not really the kind of person who is destined to be a great king. However, David and his family take the King's words to heart and begin to prepare David for his future. David will do great things in his life, but most of them he will do because he makes himself open to God, not because he wants to do what he can to fulfill the King's prophecy.

## Joab

Joab is one of the criminals who join David soon after he leaves Saul's kingdom. Joab is the only follower brave enough to stand up to David when it appears he has no plans for the future. Joab wants to know what David is going to do and how he intends to get all these people out of the mess they find themselves in. David does not like the question because he never agreed to be a leader to these people. However, David finds himself fighting for these people anyway. Many of these people, Joab included, become loyal citizens of David's kingdom later when he finds himself the king he never really wanted to be. Joab is still at David's side when Absalom comes to take away his kingdom. Joab questions David again. Joab wants David to fight Absalom and keep him from taking over the kingdom, but David refuses. David believes it is God's will that Absalom take over the kingdom and refuses to stand against God's will. Joab does not understand and watches in frustrated as David walks away from his kingdom.

## Moses

Moses is a great leader who lived in a time before David. Moses is part of a story David is told on the night his son comes to take over his kingdom. Moses was the leader of Israel when two men came to him with a large number of followers. These men thought it was time for Moses to relinquish power to them. Moses told them to come back the next day and God would settle the matter. The next day, these men and their followers were swallowed by the earth. David has his adviser tell him this story in order to show him that sometimes God does answer questions such as who should rule his kingdom on earth. David believes by doing nothing, David is allowing God to make the appropriate decision regarding whether Absalom should take over David's kingdom.



# Objects/Places

## Sheep

It is young David's responsibility to watch over the sheep his father raises to provide for the family.

## Bear

One day David saves a sheep from the hungry claws of a bear.

## Giant

David will fight off a giant one day much the way he fought the bear.

## Palace

David goes to live in a palace with an old, cranky king who is unkind to him.

## Cave

After running away from Saul, David hides in a cave with some men who have come to follow him.

## God's Kingdom

When David is an old man, he learns that his son wants to take over his kingdom. David allows this to happen, believing it is what God wants.

## Rocks

David fights both the bear and the giant with rocks.

## Spears

The army of David's time fight with spears. Saul uses spears to abuse David, both physically and symbolically.



## **Prayer**

David uses prayer to communicate with God. David believes God has a plan for him and that he should allow God to work through him.

## **Broken Men**

God uses broken men to work as his disciples on earth.

## **Balcony**

David stands on his balcony while rumor of Absalom's plans reach him.

## **Garden**

David walks in his garden while his advisers attempt to make him change his mind and fight Absalom.



# Themes

## Being a Saul

Saul is a cranky old king who is unkind. Saul treats David with disdain, afraid that he wants to steal Saul's kingdom. David takes this unkindness and lives with it, never arguing back or attempting to protect himself. The more David refuses to react to this treatment, the more frightened Saul becomes and the worse his treatment of David. Finally David has enough and decides to run away. Saul orders his men to track David down and kill him.

Saul is cruel because he is afraid of losing what is most important to him, his kingdom. Due to this inspiration, the writer implies that Saul is selfish and not filled with God's will. Saul is presented in this short novel as a bad person and bad example. Saul is human and acts on human emotion. To the writer, there are only two types of people in the world, the Saul's and the David's.

To be a Saul, a person has to be selfish and to react to situations by thinking of what will be best for themselves personally. A Saul never wonders what God might want him to do in this situation. Saul proves his selfishness in the story by fighting David from the moment they meet, without asking David if he wants to be king or to steal Saul's kingdom from him. Saul simply assumes this is what the young man wants and reacts to this assumption. Later, David does take Saul's kingdom, but only after Saul has proven himself to be selfish to his people. The book warns its readers to not be a Saul.

## Being a David

David is a kind young man who works hard and tries to always do the right thing. When David is very young he is visited by an old king who tells him he will one day be a great king himself. David does not let this go to his head, but continues to live his life as though he has never heard this prophesy. David practices throwing rocks while watch his father's sheep and one day this skill comes to his rescue when he must save a sheep from a bear. Later David will use the skill again against a great giant, causing himself an embarrassing reputation. When David is older, he goes to live with King Saul in order to learn from the great king. Saul is jealous of David and afraid of losing his kingdom to the younger man, so he treats him unkindly.

David accepts Saul's treatment of him without becoming bitter or having terrible things to say. However, he eventually becomes weary of the treatment and runs away. Saul wants David killed. David runs and hides in some caves. In time, a group of people join him, determined that David should rise up against Saul and take over his kingdom. David does not want to do this but in time comes to see that it is God's will. David takes the kingdom and is a good king. When David's own son grows up and decides it is time that he become king, David does nothing to stop him, believing this too is God's will.

David is presented in the story as a perfect Christian. David allows God to work through him and by doing this gives the reader a perfect representation of the type of person a good Christian should be. If Saul is the wrong example, David is the right example. The writer presents David in such a way that the reader is left with the impression that to be a good Christian, the reader should live their lives as David has done.

## **Spirituality**

This novel is a novel about the Christian faith and spirituality. The writer has presented this novel with the idea of showing Christians throughout the world how to know if their leaders are good leaders or not and how to live their own lives as God would like. The novel is full of stories from the Bible with a modern twist, giving the reader insight into stories they have heard thousands of times before but perhaps had never truly understood.

Spirituality is a person's ability to feel close to God and to allow God to work through them. Many Christians believe they should allow God to guide their actions toward others, as David has done in the story. This belief can often confuse a person who is not sure where God's will and free will separate within their own minds. The writer has attempted to take a little of this confusion away and to guide the reader with examples from the Bible with a few modern twists and explanations. It is this attempt that makes spirituality a major theme of the novel.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel is the authorial voice. This voice is a technique that combines the third person and the first person points of view, allowing the author to voice opinions within the text while telling the story from the third person point of view. This point of view is often identified with an unreliable narrator due to the fact that many of the opinions the author will introduce into the text are pure opinion and not often based on fact. In this novel this can be considered true since many of the author's opinions are indeed based on his personal religious experience and not on any scientific or otherwise proven facts.

The point of view of this novel works because of the nature of the novel. This novel is based on Bible stories and has been written in order to guide modern Christians during a time when several Christian leaders have been caught in unchristian-like situations. The writer tells the story of David as an example of a good leader and a poor one, showing the reader how to differentiate between the two and how to behave as a good Christian themselves. In relating these stories, the writer addresses the reader directly and shares his opinions of these situations and gives advice on how the reader can apply the lessons learned by the Bible figures in their modern day lives. It is because of this structure that the unusual point of view works.

## Setting

The novel is set in Biblical times in the holy lands of Jerusalem. The setting is an area where sheep and bears flourish and armies fight with spears. The weather and the desert sands are not as important to the story as the Biblical significance of it. The setting is what is considered by Christians God's Kingdom on earth. It is this place that Saul rules and is jealous of David, treating him badly due to his own selfishness. It is also this place that David comes to rule and is a good, kind king who one day finds himself in the same situation as Saul. However, David reacts differently, creating the contrast that the writer has attempted to create in this novel.

The general setting is not important to the novel, therefore there is little detail given about its physical appearance in the novel. This technique works because it keeps the reader from becoming distracted by something that is unimportant to the overall moral of the story. The moral is the most important part of the story, the climax, and the writer has gone out of his way to keep the reader on track and free of distraction. Therefore the setting, or lack thereof, works perfectly in this novel.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is a mixture of modern English and old English. The writer has taken stories from the Bible and written them in modern English in order to manipulate them into a moral that he hopes will help his readers in a time of crisis. However, in doing this, the writer has attempted to hold on to some of the traditional language of the Bible, especially within the dialogue, to remind the reader where the stories have come from and what they have been presented here to do. This combination of modern English and old English keep the reader on track and help create a tone of religious integrity that aids the writer in his quest to teach the reader a moral lesson based on the Bible.

The language in this novel can be confusing to the reader, especially one who is weary of reading anything that includes a great deal of old English. The dialogue is stilted and often difficult to read. Also, the transition between modern English and old English is often clumsy and difficult to follow. However, the reader who can follow the novel is impressed by the use of both modern English and Biblical speech, catching the writer's intention and feeling as though a great lesson has been learned. There is a religious feel about the book that the language helps to underscore and for this reason the language of this novel works.

## Structure

The novel is divided into two parts and twenty-seven chapters. The novel is extremely short, causing the chapters to be no more than a few paragraphs in length. The story is simple and straight forward, following a simple timeline and written in a linear fashion. However, the plot is often interrupted by chapters in which the author offers his opinion on what has happened to the characters in the previous chapters, breaking up the story in such a way that can occasionally be distracting.

The novel is the story of David, a poor shepherd boy who is told he will one day be a great king. This boy is sent to live with a king in order to learn under his guidance. However, this king is jealous and afraid David will one day take over his own kingdom. The king abuses David. David finally runs from this abuse and finds himself the leader of a great deal of people who are also weary of the king's abuse. David becomes king of these people only to find himself in the same situation with his own son attempting to take over his kingdom. It is a story with a moral that is meant to teach its readers what kind of man a leader should be and how a Christian should allow God's will to flow through him instead of acting on their own selfish desires.

## Quotes

"The youngest son of any family bears two distinctions: He is considered to be both spoiled and uninformed. Usually little is expected of him." Part One, Chapter 1, pg. 3

"On one such visit to the battlefield, he killed another bear, in exactly the same way as he had the first. This bear, however, was nine feet tall and bore the name Goliath. As a result of this unusual feat, young David found himself a folk hero." Part One, Chapter 2, pg. 9

"The mad king saw David as a threat to the king's kingdom. Saul did not understand, it seems, that God should be left to decide what kingdom survives which threats." Part One, Chapter 4, pg. 13

"God has a university. It's a small school. Few enroll; even fewer graduate. Very, very few indeed." Part One, Chapter 5, pg. 15

"Unlike anyone else in spear-throwing history, David did not know what to do when a spear was thrown at him. He did not throw Saul's spears back at him. Nor did he make spears of his own and throw them." Part One, Chapter 7, pg. 19

"No one knows the answer. Except God. And He never tells." Part One, Chapter 8, pg. 22

"David accepted this fate. He embraced the cruel circumstances. He lifted no hand nor offered resistance. Nor did he grandstand his piety. Silently, privately, he bore the crucible of humiliation." Part One, Chapter 9, pg. 25

"How does a person know when it is finally time to leave Lord's anointed—especially if Lord's anointed is after the order of King Saul?" Part One, Chapter 10, pg. 27

"How strange, is it not, what suffering begets?" Part One, Chapter 11, pg. 30

"Suffering was giving birth. Humility was being born." Part One, Chapter 12, pg. 32

"It warmed your heart to know a man who saw things so clearly. Discerning. Yes, that was the word that best described Absalom—discerning. He could penetrate to the heart of any problem." Part Two, Chapter 20, pg. 61

"The true king turned and walked quietly out of the throne room, out of the palace, out of the city. He walked and walked..." Part Two, Chapter 27, pg. 98

## Topics for Discussion

Why does the old king tell David he will one day be king? How has David proven himself worthy of this prediction? Is this why David goes to live with Saul? Is David destined to be king of Saul's kingdom before he goes to live with him?

Why does David one day begin practicing throwing rocks? How does David know he will one day need this skill? Why is David happy for killing one of God's creatures? Should David have killed the bear if he is a good Christian?

Why does the writer gloss over David's murder of Goliath? Why is this unimportant to the moral of the story? Why is David embarrassed by the notoriety this causes him? Would you be embarrassed by the attention?

Discuss the symbolism of the spears. Why does the writer say that Saul throws spears at David? What are these spears? Are they really spears or are they unkind words? Why does David not respond to Saul's spears? How does this make a distinction between David and Saul?

Why does David run away from Saul? Is David a bad Christian for running away? Why does David not welcome his followers? Is David a reluctant king? Should David have turned away from these followers? What might have happened if he had?

Why does David not fight Absalom for his kingdom? Why do his followers believe he should? Do you believe this is really the way God intended for David to behave? How does David know his actions are God's will? How does the reader?

What are the differences between Saul and David? Why does the writer consider Saul an example of a bad person, or confused person? Why is David considered God's vessel? Is David a martyr?

What are the differences between David and Absalom? Is Absalom a good person? Is Absalom a vessel of God? Is Absalom a Saul? If so, how? Should David help Absalom be a better person? Why does David seem not to be concerned with Absalom's future?