



September 14, 2025

Strength in Trials: Upward Response

SUMMARY: When we gather together, we do so to honor God, to seek His kingdom first, and to trust that He is present with us—Emmanuel, God with us. Life is full of unexpected events, and how we respond to them reveals the true state of our hearts. Easy days rarely show our character; it's the curveballs, the tragedies, and the moments of loss that expose what's really inside us. Whether it's a personal crisis, a national tragedy, or simply the daily grind, these moments test us and shape us for eternity.

Reflecting on the story of David in 1 Samuel 30, we see a powerful example of how to respond when everything falls apart. David and his men returned to find their city burned and their families taken. The initial responses were deeply human: some wept until they had no strength left, others looked for someone to blame. These are natural reactions, but they don't bring healing or restoration. Pain is unavoidable, but misery is optional; it's all about how we steward our pain.

David, however, chose a different path. Instead of looking inward in despair or outward in blame, he looked upward—he strengthened himself in the Lord. This was a hinge moment in his life, a turning point that prepared him to become king. He prayed, sought godly counsel, praised God, remembered God's past faithfulness, and sometimes simply waited in trust. These practices are not just ancient history; they are the blueprint for how we can respond to our own trials.

We are called to cast our cares on Jesus, to surround ourselves with people who point us back to Him, to praise even when it's hard, to remember God's faithfulness, and to wait on Him when we have no words left. Communion reminds us that evil does not win—what looked like the darkest day in history became Good Friday because God turned evil to good. We live in hope, knowing that one day all evil will be destroyed and we will dwell with God forever. Until then, we don't waste our days in fear or bitterness, but we find our strength, rest, and victory in Jesus.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 30, John 16:33, 1 Peter 5:7,

Application Questions Continued below....



APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

- 1. When you face unexpected hardship, what is your first instinct—do you look inward in despair, outward in blame, or upward to God? Can you think of a recent example? What would it look like to respond differently next time?**
- 2. “Pain is unavoidable, but misery is optional.” Is there a painful situation in your life where you feel stuck in misery? What would it mean for you to “steward your pain” well and move forward?**
- 3. Blame is described as a tempting but unhelpful response. Is there someone or something you have been blaming for your pain or disappointment? What would it look like to release that blame and pray for justice instead?**
- 4. David surrounded himself with people who pointed him back to God (like Abiathar the priest). Who are the “Abiathars” in your life—people who encourage you to seek God? How can you be intentional about seeking their support when you’re struggling?**
- 5. Practices like prayer, praise, remembering God’s faithfulness, and waiting on Him. Which of these do you find most difficult when you’re in a hard season? What is one step you could take this week to practice it?**
- 6. Today’s message ended with a call not to waste our days in fear or bitterness. Is there a specific fear or bitterness you need to let go of? What would it look like to find your strength, rest, and victory in Jesus instead?**