

1 SAMUEL

FAITH IN FAITHLESS TIMES

A Life-Group Resource

crossroads

1 Samuel: Faith in Faithless Times

Facilitation Guides

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A Word to the Leader:

As we study through 1 Samuel in our LifeGroups, remember that 1 Samuel is a type of Scripture known as a narrative passage – a passage that tells a story. I want to encourage you to begin your facilitation time by *telling the story of each passage*. Resist the urge at this point to read it to your group. Instead, tell the story like you would tell it to a child. Make the story come to life! After you tell the story, you will directly read passages from the text as you guide the discussion for the group. After you have personally led the group through the “storying” of the passage for a couple of weeks, *ask someone else to lead that portion for the next week*. Feel free to use anyone in the group to do this! Be sure to check on them during the week to see if they need any help. Sharing this responsibility with others will help train them for future leadership and draw them into the discussion time.

A Word on Resources:

I want to commend four resources to you as you lead these discussions. You don't have to use all four (or any of them), but if you want a great tool to help you in your study beyond the guides we provide, each of these will be incredibly beneficial to you. You can find them all online or in a LifeWay store.

- *1 Samuel* by Richard Phillips in the *Reformed Expository Commentary Series*
- *1 Samuel* by John Woodhouse in the *Preach the Word Commentary Series*
- *1 Samuel* by Dale Ralph Davis in the *Focus on the Bible Commentary Series*
- *The Message of the Old Testament* by Mark Dever



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Session One: The Birth of Samuel

1 Samuel 1:1-28

ICEBREAKER: Who is the best leader you personally know?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 1:1-28. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life.

Read 1 Samuel 1:6-8.

- Why do you think Peninnah was so mean to Hannah?
 - How would you define “bullying”?
 - Do you think Peninnah’s treatment of Hannah qualifies as bullying?
 - Why do you think we sometimes are so cruel to people in our own families?
 - Does Elkanah bear any blame for the situation? How?

Read 1 Samuel 1:9-11.

- What do you think is going on in Hannah’s heart here?
 - Is it right for us to “bargain with God” the way Hannah does in verse 11? Why or why not?
 - Does anyone have a personal testimony about “bargaining with God”? How did it work out for you?
 - What can we learn about desperate prayer from Hannah?
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: Hannah seems to be describing a Nazirite vow. The Nazirite vow was usually made by an individual for a season of time. In that period of time, he wouldn’t drink strong drink, touch any unclean thing, or cut his hair. Sampson is the most memorable example of this in the Bible. Like Samuel, he was exposed to this vow before his birth.

Read 1 Samuel 1:12-18.

- What can we learn about Eli’s judgment of Hannah?
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: In verse 16, the phrase “a worthless woman” is literally “a daughter of Belial” or “a woman of destruction.” Hannah discerned that Eli thought she was a horrible person by the way he responded to her. This fact helps us see the harshness with which he must have spoken to her.
 - Why should we be careful not to be too quick to jump to judgment of others?
 - Does anyone have a personal example of someone judging you too quickly or of you wrongly judging another too quickly?
- Verse 17-18 is a remarkable turn of events. What does it teach us about trusting God after we have prayed?
 - Do you find it easy or difficult to trust God after you have prayed?
 - What does it look like if you are not trusting the Lord after you have prayed?
 - Conversely, what does it look like if you are trusting God with the matters about which you have prayed?
 - How can being transparent with others help in this process?



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Read 1 Samuel 1:19-20.

- LEADER'S INSIGHT: Help you group understand that the phrase “and the Lord remembered her” in verse 19 is not a statement about God having a lapse in memory. When the Bible refers to God “remembering” something, we should not understand this from a human perspective, like when we remember where we left our lost keys. Richard Phillips writes about this:

“This does not suggest that God had previously forgotten Hannah or that he was too busy running the universe to pay attention to her needs before she pointed them out. It means, rather, that God was mindful of her prayer and ordered events to work in blessing for Hannah. The same verb is used in Genesis 8:1, when after the great flood ‘God remembered Noah,’ that is, God kept his covenant promise and made sure to save Noah. This language speaks of God’s faithfulness in hearing the prayers and meeting the needs of his people.”¹

- What does God’s response to Hannah teach us about prayer?
- How should we apply that to our lives?

Read 1 Samuel 1:25-28.

- Could you have done what Hannah did?
- In verse 28, she says she “lent” her son to the Lord. In what ways does God lend our children to us?
 - How should this impact our parenting?
 - How do we instill faith in our children?
 - Challenge your group to consider doing a family worship time at least twice a week. They can even just review the passage we cover in LifeGroup!

Close by praying for needs of others. You might even consider praying for your prayer life!

¹Richard Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012), 25.



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Session Two: The Sons of Eli

1 Samuel 2:12-36

ICEBREAKER: When I say “saint,” which person pops into your mind?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 2:12-36. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life.

Have the group name as many ministers as they can think of who have had “moral failures.”²

Tonight’s passage “artfully alternates between the sinful practices of Eli’s wicked sons and the innocent purity and righteousness of Samuel and his family.”³

Read 1 Samuel 2:12.

- Eli’s sons were priests. Can you think of a worst way to describe a priest?
 - What do you think happens when a church (or in this case, a nation) is spiritually led by people who “don’t know the Lord”?
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: The phrase “worthless men” is the same one Hannah used in 1:16 to defend herself. It means “sons of Belial” or “sons of destruction.”

Recap 1 Samuel 2:13-17.

- LEADER’S INSIGHT: The sons of Eli display their contempt for the Lord by how they treat the offerings. The best parts of the meat should have been reserved for the Lord. Instead, they would try to rob the best portions for themselves. Emboldened by their success at getting the juicy meat, they went further and demanded even the fat portions, which were always reserved for the Lord!
- How can we show contempt for the Lord in a worship environment?
 - For example, a business man may use the church more for business connections than for worship. A single person may see church as a place to score a new date, more than a place of worship. What are other ways we can show contempt for the Lord in a worship environment?
- Read v. 17. This verse clearly tells us that what these men did was “sin.”

Read 1 Samuel 2:18-21.

- In contrast to the sons of Eli, Samuel is growing before the Lord.
- The Bible doesn’t give us much insight here, but Eli and Phineas are in the same environment as Samuel. Why do you think the brothers were sinful and Samuel is growing?
 - Do you think that we sometimes don’t take advantage of what the Lord gives us as a means of spiritual growth?

²You might want to check this out to refresh your memory: <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/2008/09/A-Gallery-of-Fallen-Religious-Leaders.aspx>

³Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2003), 70.



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- How can we be more diligent to take every opportunity to grow spiritually?

Read 1 Samuel 2:22-25.

- Samuel speaks to his sons. Was this enough action? What should he have done?
 - LEADER'S INSIGHT: Richard Phillips writes, "Eli comes across as a well-meaning and personally godly man, but as an ineffective spiritual leader and a failure in governing his sons. . . . Eli's failure is seen in that although he heard about his sons' sins and he talked to them about their behavior, he did nothing to curb these wicked actions."⁴
 - Read Proverbs 13:24. What does this passage teach us about discipline?
 - Do you think parents today consistently discipline their children in accordance with God's Word? Why or why not?
 - Read 1 Kings 1:6. This verse tells us that David never really bothered to discipline his son. He did not hold them accountable for their actions. While David was a godly man, his progeny was known for treachery, murder, rape, and treason. How does David's parental failure play into that horrible end result?
- Read verse 25 again.
 - This verse ends with the challenging phrase "for it was the will of the Lord to put them to death."
 - LEADER'S INSIGHT: Richard Phillips is helpful here: "This statement does not remove responsibility for Eli's sons. The point, rather, is to show that God was so outraged by the young men's sins that he resolved to punish them with death, and to this end he hardened their hearts to their father's reproof."⁵ Also consider what Dale Ralph Davis says, "Someone can remain so firm in his rebellion that God will confirm him in it, so much so that he will remain utterly deaf to and unmoved by any warnings of judgment or please for repentance."⁶ This verse stands as a warning to us to not persist in our sins. We must repent!
 - In what ways is the conviction of the Holy Spirit a gift?
 - When a brother or sister is unrepentant, we should never claim to know the will of God in hardening them. Our role is to continue to call them to repentance (Galatians 6:1). It is easy to give up on others. Don't!

Read 1 Samuel 2:26.

- Again, Samuel is a contrast to the sons of Eli. Also, the testimony about Samuel's growth reminds us a lot of Jesus (Luke 2:52)!

Recap 1 Samuel 2:27-36.

- Read verse 29. In what way is Samuel responsible for his sons?
 - Will God hold us responsible for our children's actions? Even as they are adults? (The answer to this is complicated. Obviously, our children make their own choices. But we are held responsible on whether or not we shepherd them, even

⁴Richard Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012), 55.

⁵Phillips, 56.

⁶Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel* (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2000), 27.



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- as adults. So we are not responsible for their behavior. But we *are* responsible for our behavior or lack of activity in calling them to faith.)
- How was Samuel punished? (The priesthood passes from his line.)
- Read verses 34-35.
 - This promise has a two-fold fulfillment. It is fulfilled in the life of Samuel (see 1 Samuel 22:6-23 and 1 Kings 2:27). But it is also fulfilled in a Messianic way through the coming of Jesus.
 - In what ways is Jesus a “better priest”?
 - How would we contrast Jesus with the sons of Eli?

ASK: What do you feel like the main lessons are from this text that we can apply to our lives?



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Session Three: The Lord Calls Samuel

1 Samuel 3:1-21

ICEBREAKER: Are you a good “secret keeper”?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 3:1-21. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life.

Tonight’s passage helps us see how God is working in the nation of Israel even when the leadership is corrupt (Hophni and Phineas are corrupt; Eli doesn’t address their corruption decisively).

Read 1 Samuel 3:1.

- Has anyone ever been through a spiritually dry season?
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: **GOD DESERTIONS**
 - What do you think it means that “the word of the Lord was rare in those days” and that “there was no frequent vision”?
 - In our lives, what are some reasons that the word of the Lord can be rare?
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: We can sense distance from God when we are disobedient and he is chastening us (Heb. 12:5-11), when God is using that sense of distance to push us to seek him with all our heart (Jer. 29:13), and when He sovereignly has a plan that includes a sense of distance from him (like Jesus on the cross – Mt. 27:46).

Recap 1 Samuel 3:4-7.

- Who was your “Eli”?
 - If your group doesn’t respond immediately, give them time to think; this is a difficult question. You may need to clarify the question. If so, help them understand we mean, “Who is the person who helped you grow spiritually?”
- Whose “Eli” are you?
 - For your own edification, ponder on 2 Timothy 2:2. As the leader of the group, you should have a “Samuel” in your group that you are developing as their “Eli”.

Read 1 Samuel 3:8-9.

- How can we be like Eli and point people to the Word of God?
- Let’s list all of the ways that God speaks to us.
 - This list may include things like Scripture, preaching, teaching, songs, friends, nature, books, or even silence.
- What are the dangers of subjective experiences?
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: By subjective experiences, we mean individualistic experiences. This could be a “gut feeling” or something of that nature. Help your group see that we can’t always trust our hearts (Jer. 17:9) and that it is always best to interpret our feelings through the objective grid of Scripture. Sadly, a lot of Christians interpret Scripture through the grid of their feelings, reversing the order and leading to some very sketchy conclusions. For example, a struggling spouse



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may say, “God doesn’t want me to be unhappy. I feel like God has released me from my marriage.” This feeling is wrong if there exists no biblical grounds for divorce.

Read 1 Samuel 3:13.

- What does this verse teach us about consequences?
 - Do you think that God is being fair towards Eli?
 - What does this verse teach us about God?
 - Help the group see that God is both perfectly merciful and perfectly just.

Read 1 Samuel 3:15.

- How would you feel if you were Samuel?
 - Why do you think Samuel felt this way?
 - What is a modern day equivalent of this account?
 - For example, God may call us to lovingly confront a brother or sister who is in sin (Galatians 6:1).

Read 1 Samuel 3:17-18.

- How does this demonstrate the two-way street of mentoring?
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: There is no hard-and-fast rule that says that mentors cannot learn from their protégés. In fact, good mentors will have teachable spirits and learn much from those they are mentoring. Also, help your group understand that young Samuel is saying hard things to Eli. Eli had apparently not said hard things to his sons until it was too late.

Read 1 Samuel 3:19.

- When is says that the Lord “let none of his words fall to the ground,” what do you think that meant?
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: Richard Phillips writes, “The statement that none of Samuel’s words fell to the ground means that God caused hi prophetic messages to come true.”⁷
- What does this teach us about God’s faithfulness?

CLOSE:

One commentator writes, “The text of 1 Samuel 3 is meant to arouse us out of our lethargy, as it aroused Samuel from his early-morning sleep. Let our answer be like his: ‘Here I am!’”⁸

Let’s pray and ask God to arouse in us a passion for Him and His Glory!

ASSIGN:

Ask for a volunteer to deliver the story from next week’s text, 1 Samuel 4.

⁷Richard Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012), 72.

⁸Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 85-86.



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Session Four: The Philistines Capture the Ark

1 Samuel 4:1-22

ICEBREAKER: If you could go on an adventure with Indiana Jones, what historical relic would you like to capture?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 4:1-22. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life.

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

Read 1 Samuel 4:2.

- **LEADER'S INSIGHT:** Read the following quote to your group: "Israel's relationship with the Philistines was a barometer of their relationship with God. When they experienced defeat, they saw it as the withdrawal of divine favour."⁹
 - Is defeat in our lives always the result of God's judgment? (NO!)
 - What are some other reasons we might experience defeat?
 - For example, Paul struggled physically as the Lord was teaching him humility (2 Cor. 12:1-10), Job experienced horrible things in order for God to display his glory in his life, and we are told that trials produce spiritual fruit in our life (James 1:3; Romans 5:3-4).
 - We know that our relationship with the Philistines isn't our barometer for our relationship with God. What might that barometer be for us?
 - Answers may include things like our engagement in biblical community, our commitment to the word, and our church attendance (all positive indicators). Negatively, we might include hanging out with negative influences, wasting our time, or failing to obey God.

Read 1 Samuel 4:5.

- In this verse, Israel is using the Ark of the Covenant as a "holy power box," a sort of military good luck charm. Do you see this as manipulative?
 - **LEADER'S INSIGHT:** Richard Phillips offers very helpful insight on Israel's use of the Ark in this military engagement:

There are two main ways to look at the Israelites' action, one of which is more charitable and the other less so, though both are condemning. More charitably, it is assumed by some commentators that Israel saw the ark as a symbol of God's covenant and therefore a pledge of his commitment to their success. . . . The other view asserts that this is precisely what the Israelites had in mind. . . . It would be all too easy for the people to believe that

⁹Gordon J. Keddie, *Dawn of a Kingdom: The Message of 1 Samuel* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1988), 61-62.



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it was the ark that brought miraculous power rather than God himself – his presence merely symbolized by the ark – who won Israel’s victories. Especially in a time when the people did not know the Lord, it is practically inevitable that the people should think of the ark as a divine power box. So the elders summoned to the rear for their ace in the hole, the ark that put (they thought) the power of God at their disposal.

The exercise of religion in an attempt to manipulate or control God is common both in the Bible and in our contemporary world.¹⁰

- How do people try to manipulate God today? (through financial giving, through service, through bargaining with God, etc.)
- Why don’t the Israelites consult Samuel before sending out the Ark?
- LEADER’S INSIGHT: “The elders thought that by bringing the ark they had ensured that God would defend his honor; little did they realize that God intended to defend his honor by sending the Philistines to bring judgment on his idolatrous people!”¹¹

Recap 1 Samuel 4:6-18.

Read 1 Samuel 4:18.

- LEADER’S INSIGHT: “This is a telling remark: Eli seems always to be sitting down and waiting when he should be standing up and acting.”¹²
- Why do you think Eli is trembling?
 - Remind the class of the prophecy that was made through the unnamed man (1 Sam. 2:27-36 and) and repeated through the boy Samuel (1 Samuel 3:10-14).
- Note the detail that Eli was “heavy.” How might this be connected to the sins of Hophni and Phineas (1 Sam. 2:12-16)?
- How would you define a “consequence”?
- Read Galatians 6:7. How should this motivate us towards holiness?

Read 1 Samuel 4:21.

- Can anyone share a testimony about being a part of a situation where God’s blessing was removed (from a church or from a home or from an individual)?
- When God’s glory departs, what is that like?
- How do we prevent God’s glory from departing?
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: They only thing we can do is live holy lives. “The Old Testament shows that when God’s people persist in rebellion, walking in ways of wickedness and bowing down to the idols of the world, God will inevitably

¹⁰Richard Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012, 78-79).

¹¹Phillips, 83.

¹²Phillips, 86.



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withdraw his glory – that is, the power and blessing of his presence, from his people.”¹³

- LEADER’S INSIGHT: This idea of God’s glory departing isn’t just an Old Testament idea. While we would rightly affirm that Jesus preserves his people to the end, we should also consider the warnings that were given to the churches in Revelation 2-3. God threatens to remove their lampstands if they remain wayward.
- Once God has written “Ichabod” over a nation or church or individual, is there anything we can do to see a return of God’s glory and power?
 - Read Zechariah 1:3. This verse was given to the same nation that had “Ichabod” written on it. Jeremiah wrote something similar in Jeremiah 29:12-14.
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: The Gospel message is that God has answered “Ichabod” with “Immanuel.” Ichabod – the glory has departed, has been replaced by Immanuel – God with us! This is a thought worth celebrating today!

Close by praying that God will help us remain faithful to him even when it is difficult.

ASSIGN:

Ask for a volunteer to deliver the story from next week’s text, 1 Samuel 5.

¹³Phillips, 91.



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Session Five: Jehovah destroys Dagon

1 Samuel 5:1-12

ICEBREAKER: What is your favorite thing about Spring?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 5:1-12. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life.

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

LEADER INSIGHT: Share this wonderful introduction to this chapter with your group:

First Samuel 4 records Israel's defeat at the battle of Ebenezer, in which Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain and the Ark of the Covenant fell into Philistine hands. First Samuel 5 follows up by telling of the ark's fate among the Philistines. The Israelites feared that their beloved artifact had been lost forever or, even worse, that God's power might now pass to their enemies. But instead of God's falling into their hands, those who possessed God's holy vessel discovered what the writer of Hebrews warns us: 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31).'¹⁴

Read 1 Samuel 5:2-3.

- What do these verses teach us about God?
- **LEADER'S INSIGHT:** "Yahweh will not permit the Israelites to use the ark of the Covenant as though it were a magical wand. But neither can he permit the Philistines to demean him as a trophy of their victory. This episode illustrates that Yahweh himself is responsible for Israel's defeat and that, contrary to appearances, he is not powerless in the hands of Israel's enemies."¹⁵
- Read Ephesians 2:18-22.
 - How can we focus our minds more on "Christ triumphant" as we see him in this passage?
- Read Philippians 2:9-11.
 - Here again we see Christ triumphant!
- Remind your group that Christ is triumphant. He is bigger than any issue they face, in relationship that is failing, or any problem that is overwhelming them. It may be appropriate to ask if anyone wants you to stop and pray for them right now. Give folks a second to think. Admitting we need prayer requires humility and transparency.

Read 1 Samuel 5:4.

¹⁴Richard Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012), 96.

¹⁵Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 117.



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- Why do you think the Philistines set Dagon back up?
- What do you think the Philistines thought when they came back in to find Dagon on the ground a second time, this time with his arms and head cut off?
 - LEADER'S INSIGHT: "This (the cutting off of his arms and head) mirrored a common practice performed on the corpses of slain enemies: their heads and hands would be taken as trophies of their conquest. In effect, Dagon had been conquered and slain by the God of Israel's ark."¹⁶
 - How do people try to manipulate God today? (through financial giving, through service, through bargaining with God, etc.)
 - Why don't the Israelites consult Samuel before sending out the Ark?
 - LEADER'S INSIGHT: "The elders thought that by bringing the ark they had ensured that God would defend his honor; little did they realize that God intended to defend his honor by sending the Philistines to bring judgment on his idolatrous people!"¹⁷
- What does God's defeat of Dagon teach us?
 - How should we apply that to our lives? (Help your people discover application here! This is a great passage to teach about the Lordship of Christ and his supreme rule over all things!)

Read 1 Samuel 5:6.

- Is God being cruel here? Why or why not?
- LEADER'S INSIGHT: "Whereas Dagon's hands were cut off, the Lord's hand was heavy upon Dagon's people. It seems likely that God afflicted the Philistines with bubonic plague, the term *tumors* speaking generally about swellings and growths. This was a disease that frequented coastal regions, spread by mice and rats that came in on ships. We see a connection between the tumors and mice in 1 Samuel 6:4-5, when golden mice are offered in sacrifice."¹⁸

Read 1 Samuel 5:8-10.

- As the Ark is passed from town to town, how do we see God defending himself?
- While we clearly see that God defends himself (then and now), we must also acknowledge that God calls us to give a defense for the Gospel. Read 1 Peter 3:15-16.
- How can we help each other do this more effectively?

CLOSE:

It is *very important* to note how this passage foreshadows what God would do in the New Testament through Christ. While we see God in this passage as just and righteous, we can also tell the world that he is a God who is merciful and saving. "The incident of the ark's falling into

¹⁶Phillips, 100.

¹⁷Phillips, 83.

¹⁸Phillips, 101.



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enemy hands was only a preview of a greater work of salvation. God sent his own Son into this rebel world to deliver his people. Jesus surrendered to his enemies, but did not strike them with his heavy hand. Instead, he yielded himself to death on the cross. In this way, God struck the heaviest blow to the power and dominion of sin, taking away its curse by cleansing our guilt with the precious blood of Christ. The plague of sin that rightly should slay us fell instead on Jesus Christ. Indeed, it was for Philistine sinners like us that Jesus died.”¹⁹

ASSIGN:

Ask for a volunteer to deliver the story from next week’s text, 1 Samuel 6:1-7:2.

¹⁹Phillips, 106.



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Session Six: The Ark Returns

1 Samuel 6:1-7:2

ICEBREAKER: What is your favorite vegetable?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 6:1-7:2. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life.

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

ASK:

- How would you define the word “wrath”?
- How would you define “the wrath of God”?
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: “It may surprise us to find how frequently the Bible talks about the wrath of God. Yet if God loves all that is right and good, and all that conforms to his moral character, then it should not be surprising that he would hate everything that is opposed to his moral character. God’s wrath directed against sin is therefore closely related to God’s holiness and justice. God’s wrath may be defined as follows: *God’s wrath means that he intensely hates all sin.*”²⁰
- Can you name any Bible passages from the Old Testament where we see God’s wrath on display?
 - Answers may include Noah’s flood, the book of Joshua, the sin of Achan, Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues in Egypt, or God’s dealing with Nebuchadnezzar.
- Can you name any Bible passages from the New Testament where we see God’s wrath on display?
 - Answers may include Annanias and Saphira, Jesus turning over the money changers’ tables, the judgment in Revelation, and the accounts of Jesus’ crucifixion.

LEADER’S INSIGHT: Help your group to see that God’s wrath is not just an Old Testament issue. I have heard it said before that in the Old Testament God was primarily expressing his judgment while in the New Testament He is primarily expressing his love. Nothing could be further from the truth! In fact, this type of thinking makes a mockery of the price Jesus paid on the cross. Romans 3:25 tells us that God put forward Christ as a “propitiation” for our sins. A propitiation is “a sacrifice that bears God’s wrath to the end and in so doing changes God’s wrath toward us into favor.”²¹ To think of God’s judgment as being an Old Testament concept is to diminish what Jesus did on your behalf!

²⁰Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 205-206.

²¹Grudem, 575.



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LEADER'S INSIGHT: Help your group connect the dots between what this passage is teaching and what happened in 1 Samuel 5. You may want to read over 1 Samuel 5 before the group. Remind them that the Ark of the Covenant, the very symbol of God's presence, had been in Philistine territory for seven months. It had been displayed in Dagon's temple (God "slayed" Dagon!) and marched from town to town. Everywhere the Ark went, people fell ill and died.

Read 1 Samuel 6:1-4.

- Why do you think the Philistines are sending these oddly shaped golden offerings?
 - **LEADER'S INSIGHT:** Most scholars think the sickness that had befallen the Philistines was the bubonic plague, sometimes called the Black Death. This sickness was spread through vermin and resulted in fast-growing tumors that would rupture.
- The Philistines consulted their "diviners" and "priests"? What does the world consult today when it doesn't know where to turn?
 - Can we be in danger of treating God (or the church) like a "holy palm reader"?
 - "God's accommodation to the Philistines' procedure should not encourage us to rely on superstitious approaches to discerning God's will. Subjective signs crafted out of the folly of our minds are no way to discern God's will; instead, they invite us to divinize our own hunches and sometimes provide an opportunity for Satan to deceive us. Instead, we should remember the testimony of Peter, who witnessed several clear divine revelations, including the audible speaking of God's voice. Yet Peter tells us that 'we have something more sure, the prophetic word, ' that is, the Bible, 'to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place' (2 Peter 1:19). If we want God's revelation to us, the place to look is in the holy Scriptures, which God has given as a lamp to our feet and a light to for our path (Ps. 119:105)."²²

Read 1 Samuel 6:6.

- What does this verse teach us about the Philistines' knowledge of the Israelites' deliverance from Egyptian bondage?
 - Remember, God had delivered Israel from Egypt some time before this (hundreds of years). Yet, this is still known in the world!
- Can we learn from others' mistakes, or is it important for us to make mistakes ourselves?
- If we can learn from others, what does that tell us about the importance of transparency and sharing the story of our lives together?

Read 1 Samuel 6:7-12.

- Was anyone here raised on a farm?
- How do cows with calves respond when they are separated?
 - If you've never seen how a mother and calf act when separated, watch this video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYJPbrxdn8w> . Be sure to note how the mother chases down the vehicle with her calf in it.
- How do cows act that have never been yoked before?

²²Richard Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012), 113.



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- “Anyone who has been around farm animals knows that mother cows and their nursing calves are practically inseparable. Thus, if the cows went away on their own to the nearby Jewish city, it could only be a confirmation from the Lord.”²³
- We see that the cows go straight to Beth-shemesh. What does this teach us about God’s involvement?

Read 1 Samuel 6:13-15.

- What do you think the people of Beth-shemesh were thinking when the Ark rolled into town?
 - What does their sacrifice indicate?
- Do we often stop to praise God when he comes through in a difficult circumstance?

Read 1 Samuel 6:19-20.

- Why do you think the men of Beth-shemesh looked in the Ark?
- Do you think God “over-reacted” to what they did? Why or why not?
- When we become flippant with the holy things of God, are we generally aware of how deserving we are of God’s wrath?

Read 1 Samuel 6:21-7:2.

- In response to God’s judgment upon the men who looked into the Ark, the people of Beth-shemesh sent the Ark away to the people of Kiriath-jearim.
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: “It is noteworthy that Kiriath-jearim was a Gibeonite city (Josh. 9:17). The Gibeonites were non-Israelites who tricked Joshua into permitting them to live and who were assigned as woodcutters and water-bearers for the tabernacle (9:21-22, 27).”²⁴
- How *should* the people of Beth-shemesh responded?
- In what ways do we see others (or ourselves) push away from God when they experience difficulties or chastisement from God?
- Why do you think people respond that way?
- How can we help each other to respond more biblically?

ASSIGN:

Ask someone in your group to tell the story of 1 Samuel 7:3-17 at the next meeting.

²³Richards, 112.

²⁴Richards, 116.



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Session Seven: Raising Ebenezer

1 Samuel 7:3-17

ICEBREAKER: Would you classify yourself as someone who “forgets easily” or as a person who has “a mind like a steel trap”?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 7:3-17. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life. Begin to share this responsibility with other group members!

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

LEADER’S INSIGHT: Tonight’s text helps us really dig into the idea of *repentance*. There may be no more important concept for modern Christians to consider. We struggle with sin daily, often succumbing to it in devastating ways. Our passage picks up 20 years after last week’s text (see 1 Sam. 7:2). Twenty years of oppression finally made Israel miss God’s loving care and even lament the absence of the Lord himself. May their experience inspire us to live god-ward lives!

ASK:

- How would you define the word “repentance”?
 - The *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* defines repentance this way: “Change of mind; also can refer to regret or remorse accompanying a realization that wrong has been done or to any shift or reversal of thought. In its biblical sense repentance refers to a deeply seated and thorough turning from self to God. It occurs when a radical turning to God takes place, an experience in which God is recognized as the most important fact of one’s existence.”²⁵
- What are some wrong ways people may understand repentance?
 - On one end of the spectrum, they may misunderstand repentance as almost an “Oops, I’m sorry, God” sort of viewpoint. On the other extreme, they may see repentance as being accompanied by penance, including things like self-mutilation and punishment.
- What are the dangers of misunderstanding repentance?
 - Because our salvation comes by faith through repentance (see Romans 10:9-10, 13), it is critical that we have a correct understanding of what it means. Otherwise, we may actually have an incorrect view of what it means to be a Christian.

Read 1 Samuel 7:3-4.

- What do you think it means to return to the Lord “with all your heart” (v. 3)?

²⁵Clark Palmer, “Repentance,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2003), 1375-1376.



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- Can we return to the Lord with only part of our heart?
- One theologian has noted that returning to the Lord with the whole heart is *the* central theme in the Old Testament.²⁶
- What would you say to people who “repent” but show no fruit of repentance?
 - LEADER’S INSIGHT: Samuel commands the Israelites to put away their foreign gods and to serve God alone. This call is a clear command to bear the fruit of repentance.
- Samuel promises that if the people will repent and serve God whole-heartedly that “he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines” (v. 3).
 - What does this teach us about the faithfulness of God?
 - What does this teach us about the responsibility of God’s people to be faithful towards him?

Read 1 Samuel 7:8-11.

- The climax of this passage is in verse 10. In what ways do we see God fight for us today?
- There is a term that an advertiser recently used for people who grow immune to smells in their homes. The term is “nose blind.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7j8CSYoCXkI>) Do we sometimes grow “nose blind” to how God fights for us? Why?
- How can we prevent this spiritual “nose blindness”?
- What role does biblical community play in creating a new spiritual awareness for us?

Read 1 Samuel 7:12.

- LEADER INSIGHT: Samuel understood that people easily forget how God leads us into victory. His solution was to erect a monument of stone. He titled it “Ebenezer,” which means “stone of help.” Setting up stone memorial was not a new idea. Joshua did it twice (Josh. 4:20-24; 24:26). The curious thing about what Samuel name this memorial is that it is also the title of the place where Israel had most recently been defeated (1 Sam. 4:1). Then, the name had mocked Israel’s unbelief. The “stone of help” was no help at all that day. They were defeated. Now, after repenting, more than 20 years later, Israel experiences God’s help. Their repentance was key to experiencing victory!
- How does remembering God’s past victories in your life/someone else’s life encourage you?
 - “Christians do not live *in* the past, but we do live *out of* the past: we remember how God has proved his faithfulness and love, and thus we hope anew to arrive safely home.”²⁷
- In what ways can we “raise an Ebenezer” so that we don’t forget God’s faithfulness in our lives?
 - In what ways does communion play into this idea of memorializing God’s faithfulness?

²⁶Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 131.

²⁷Richard Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012, 128.



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- What are family traditions that can be established for the sake of telling future generations about God's faithfulness?

Read 1 Samuel 7:13-14.

- How do we see God's mercy in these verses?
- What does this verse tell us about the man Samuel?

ASSIGN: Ask someone to prepare this week to tell the narrative of 1 Samuel 8.



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Session Eight: We want a king

1 Samuel 8:1-22

ICEBREAKER: Take the following quiz with your group as a fun icebreaker. Ask them to blurt out the names. For added fun, play boys vs. girls.

- The King of Rock and Roll – Elvis Presley
- The King of Pop – Michael Jackson
- The English king with six wives – King Henry VIII
- Who sang “King of the Road”? – Roger Miller
- Who is known in NASCAR as the king? – Richard Petty
- Who stars in the sitcom “King of Queens”? Kevin James

Tonight we are going to talk about when Israel cried out to God for God to give them a king so that they could be like the rest of the nations.

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 8:1-22. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life. Begin to share this responsibility with other group members!

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

LEADER’S INSIGHT: Tonight’s text helps us see how people can “come off the rails” in their service to God. Help your group to identify with the bad guys here. We often read ourselves and project ourselves in the role of the hero. Help them to see how close we are to the villains and how the grace of God is at work in our lives so that we aren’t as bad as we could be.

Read 1 Samuel 8:1-3.

LEADER’S INSIGHT: Notice the names Samuel gives to his children: *Joel* means “Yahweh is God,” and *Abijah* means “Yahweh is our Father.”²⁸

Why do you think Samuel’s children turned out the way they did?

- Considering what Samuel saw in the life of Eli (1 Sam. 2:12-17), is it even further surprising that Samuel’s children followed the path they were on?
- How (if at all) does this passage serve as a caution to those who are still raising their children (or grandchildren)?
- How can we as a group support others who have adult children that are far from God?
- You may want to stop and pray over families at this point in the discussion.

Read 1 Samuel 8:4-9.

²⁸Richard Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012, 134.



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What is wrong with the response of the elders (v. 5)?

- How does the phrase in v. 5 “like all the nations” inform us on what the Israelite elders were thinking?
- The elders are looking for a “worldly” solution to a “spiritual” problem. Richard Phillips writes, “The same logic is displayed today when the church is urged to imitate the practices that make corporations so effective and efficient. How often it is said today that by copying worldly approaches to recruitment, marketing, and product delivery, the church can expand God’s market share in the world!”²⁹

Are you surprised that God granted their prayer request?

- **DEEP QUESTION WARNING:** Is answered prayer *always* a blessing?
- “This reminds us that we should not always be encouraged when God seems to answer our prayers. Here, God’s relenting was a sign not of his blessing but of his chastisement. The more we realize how sinful our hearts are and how frequently our thoughts and desires run astray, the more we will humbly desire God to overrule in our prayers so that his wisdom will overcome our folly, and his holiness will correct our sin.”³⁰
- Can anybody share an experience where God answered your prayer but you can look back and see that it was his loving chastisement upon you?

Does anyone else have any questions or insights from the verses we just read?

Read 1 Samuel 8:10-18.

Samuel warns the people in these verses about what having a king will be like. How many times do we see him using the word “take”?

- He will take their sons (v. 11), their daughters (v. 13), the best of their fields, vineyards, and olive orchards (v. 14), a tenth of their produce (v. 15), their servants, young men, and donkeys (v. 16).
- The verb “take” also characterized the “ways” of Eli’s sons (1 Sam. 2:14, 16) as well as Samuel’s sons (8:3). The implication is that with the king they had asked for, the problems of self-serving power that they had experienced at the hands of these young men would only be intensified.³¹

Remembering that their forefathers had been slaves in Egypt, why do you think the Israelites didn’t listen to the warning in verse 17?

Do you think what Samuel says in verse 18 would cause you to reconsider asking for a king?

Why are we so obstinate when listening to God’s warnings to us?

²⁹Phillips, 135.

³⁰Phillips, 137.

³¹John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 149.



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Read 1 Samuel 8:19-22.

In verse 20 the people want a king to fight their battles for them. Who had previously fought their battles for them?

- Repeatedly, God had fought on behalf of the Israelites. In a very real sense, they are rejecting Him as their leader and the warrior that fights for them. They were trading the spiritual victory they possessed for a worldly counterfeit.

One final thought should help us understand how we are to apply this passage. It requires us to look at this from a different vantage point – from another day, many years later.

“On the day I have in mind a man stood before the great pagan political power of *that* day – the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. Pilate put a question to this man: “Are *you* the king of the Jews? His reply was: “My kingdom is *not* of this world. If my kingdom were *of this world*, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not *from the world*” (Jn. 18:36).

Do you see what he was saying? “I am *not* a king *like all the other nations*.”

The gospel of the New Testament is that there is a king worth having, but he is a king whose kingship is altogether different from the king demanded by the elders of Israel in 1 Samuel 8. His is not “of this world.” To want a leader like the leaders of this world is foolish and faithless. To think that leaders like the leaders of this world can give us security, peace, and justice is very foolish.³²

³²Woodhouse, 151.



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Session Nine: We want a king

1 Samuel 9:1-27

ICEBREAKER: Let's make a list of character qualities that we desire in our leaders (could be political leaders, workplace leaders, community leaders, or church leaders).

Tonight we are going to be introduced to Israel's first king, Saul. We will discover his character qualities and see a picture of the young man that would soon be king of all Israel.

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 9:1-27. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life. Begin to share this responsibility with other group members!

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

Read 1 Samuel 9:1-2.

Leader's Insight: We see that, in one sense, Saul's pedigree is unimpressive. "None of these names hold any distinction in the Bible."³³ In another sense, the fact that Saul has a family pedigree indicates that his family has great wealth.³⁴ The name "Saul" means "asked for" or "dedicated." This corresponds to the elders' request for a king (1 Sam 8:4-6).

In light of verse 2, what do you make of Saul's appearance?

- How does this correspond to how we select leaders (especially political leaders) in a television age?
- I once heard that Franklin Delano Roosevelt would have been unelectable if television had been more prominent in his era (due to the fact that he was wheelchair bound). Do you agree or disagree?
- How can we get side tracked when we look at the outward appearance of others instead of character?
- Read 1 Sam 16:7 (a word to Samuel when he was anointing a young David some years after this even we are reading tonight) – "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'"

Read 1 Samuel 9:3-10.

Recap the story carefully so that your group is clearly following along with the action.

³³Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012), 146.

³⁴Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 162.



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Leader's Insight: This is not a flattering passage about Saul. Saul's aptitude for spiritual leadership is besmirched by his inability to find his father's lost donkeys. Most of Israel's famed leaders had been shepherds – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses – so Saul's incompetence at tracking down even such large beasts – who eventually found their own way home – is unflattering, to say the least!³⁵

Do you think Saul's comment was sincere in verse 5? Was he concerned about his father or potentially just tired of looking for the lost donkeys?

What does it say of Saul that he seems to be unaware of the “man of God” (verse 6)?

What does it say about the situation that the only one who has any money is the servant (verse 7-8)?

Does anyone have any further insight into verses 3-10?

Read 1 Samuel 9:11-14.

In verse 14, we see these guys sort of stumble upon Samuel. What a comforting passage! How many times in life have we not understood what the right directions were for our lives, only to discover the right person or the right circumstance to guide us. In retrospect, we clearly see God's guiding hand in these types of events!

Can someone share a time when you didn't understand that God was acting, but in retrospect you clearly saw his hand at work?

How does God's ever-present guidance make you feel?

Leader's Insight: Richard Phillips gives clear insight into what is happening in this passage: “It is obvious from the text that God had ordained every detail of this journey, even having Saul and his servant arrive at the town gates at precisely the moment Samuel walked through them (1 Sam. 9:14). Here we are reminded that God's utter sovereignty over even the smallest details of life does not conflict with the full expression of human choice and will. Through the small affairs of human lives, God fulfills his covenant promises and purposes.”³⁶

Read 1 Samuel 9:15-21.

God had ordained this “chance” meeting to be history-making. Do you think he still does this in our lives today? (i.e., the exterminator who listens to our testimony, the cashier who needs a smile, the waitress who lets you pray for her, the neighbor who has an emergency).

³⁵Phillips, 147.

³⁶Ibid., 149.



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How do you look for these “God appointments” in your ever-day life? (Talk about how we should pray that God would give us eyes to see these occurrences.)

In verses 15-17, how many times does God refer to rebellious Israel as “my people”? (3 times – verse 16 twice and verse 17 once).

- What does this tell us about how God sees us *even when we are rebellious*?
- What does this tell us about the love of God?

In verse 20, Samuel tells Saul about the missing donkeys even before Saul brings it up. How do you think this must have impacted Saul and his servant?

In verse 21, we see Saul respond with humility – a quality that is rare in the remainder of his life. We should be cautioned that pride can creep into our lives subtly!

Read 1 Samuel 9:22-27.

Samuel knew that Israel was only receiving a king because of their disobedient cry to God. In a way, Saul was God’s judgment upon Israel. Still, Samuel treats him with incredible respect and hospitality. He reserves the choice seat and the choice food for Saul. He allows him a place of rest and relaxation. And all of this was for a guy who Samuel surely looked upon with some suspicion.

How should we treat those who don’t “fit our mold”?

- Why are Christians inhospitable to outsiders?
- How can we be sure to make Crossroads a place that intentionally welcomes others?

The chapter break in this narrative is in a weird place. Still we see (halfway through the narrative), that Samuel not only offers Saul food, but he promises him “the Word of God” (vs. 27). How should this inform how we treat others?

- In what ways can we hospitably share the Word of God with others?

Close in prayer for God to open up your eyes to divine appointments this week, so that you can see opportunities to share Jesus with a lost world.



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Session Ten: Saul Anointed King

1 Samuel 10:1-27

ICEBREAKER: What/who do you think of when I say “reluctant leader”?

- The Bible is full of reluctant leaders. From Moses to Paul, many have only led after God mandated that they lead.
- D.L Moody once preached that Moses spent the first 40 years of his life thinking he was somebody, the next 40 discovering that he was a nobody, and his final 40 years discovering what God can do with a nobody. That is a great picture of reluctant leadership!
- In tonight’s lesson we will begin to see Saul’s reign. While we may remember that late in his career Saul clung to his rule as king, we may have forgotten that at first he was a very reluctant leader.

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 10:1-27. You may need to back up and give the context of 1 Samuel 9 so that people can understand where you are picking up. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life. Begin to share this responsibility with other group members!

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

Read 1 Samuel 10:1-8.

In these verses we see several things happen that deserve our attention:

- First, Saul is anointed to be “prince over . . . Israel” (v 1).
- Second, Samuel prophesies that Saul will “reign over the people of the Lord and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies” (v 1).
- Third, Samuel foretells the events that will immediately transpire in Saul’s life:
 - Saul will meet 2 men near Rachel’s tomb who will give word that the missing donkeys have returned and that his father is concerned about Saul.
 - When Saul comes near the oak of Tabor, 3 men will greet him (what each man is carrying is described in detail) and will share their bread with Saul.
 - Near Gibeath-elohim, Saul will prophesy with the prophets coming down from the high place.
- Fourth, Samuel instructs Saul to wait on him for seven days at Gilgal.

What emotions and thoughts do you imagine Saul was experiencing as Samuel anointed him?



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LEADER'S INSIGHT: The use of oil is a symbol of the spirit of God in several Old Testament passages (Is. 61:1; Zech. 4:14). Samuel is using oil to show that Saul is God's selection for Israel.³⁷

LEADER'S INSIGHT: Notice that Samuel refers to Saul as the "prince over Israel," but not as the king over Israel. He avoids the common Hebrew word that means "king" throughout the text. One could easily argue that Samuel still sees God as Israel's king, while Saul is just the man governing Israel in response to the people's wicked request for a human king.³⁸

Why do you think the details in Samuel's prophecies are so vivid?

- The details may be so vivid to help convince him that Samuel was truly sharing God's direction for his life.
- When God is confirming his direction in your life, how does He communicate with you?
 - How are your experiences alike or different from Saul's in discovering God's direction?

Read 1 Samuel 10:9-13.

We read in verse 9 that "God gave [Saul] a new heart." How have you seen God do this in your own life?

- What does it mean for God to give us a new heart?
- Ezekiel 36:26 – "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."
- Take a second and think about your week. How do you still need God to change your heart?

LEADER'S INSIGHT: This passage about Saul prophesying and having a new heart is *very* difficult for us to understand, especially in light of the later record that "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul" (1 Sam. 16:14; 18:12). Obviously, this does not destroy the doctrine of eternal security, which the Bible so clearly teaches (2 Tim 1:12; Jn 14:18; Jn 14:1-3; 1 Jn 5:10-13).³⁹ In fact, Richard Phillips writes of Saul, "Saul did not tell anyone about his receipt of the Holy Spirit, nor did he lift a finger against the Philistines. This indicates that whatever else had happened to him, Saul did not receive eternal life or enter into a true saving relationship with the Lord, for the simple reason that he showed no inclination to obey God's Word."⁴⁰ What do you think? Was Saul saved here? Or was he momentarily caught up in God's Spirit en route to his kingship? Think it through....

³⁷Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 164.

³⁸Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 164.

³⁹J. D. Greear, *Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2013). This book is a wonderful, brief read for you or anyone in your group struggling with assurance of salvation. I *highly* recommend it!

⁴⁰Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012), 154.



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Read 1 Samuel 10:14-16.

Why do you think that Saul doesn't tell his uncle of the details of his anointing as the king?

- Do you think he still lacks faith in what Samuel has prophesied?
- When we don't verbalize what God is doing in our lives, what is our silence communicating about our beliefs?

Read 1 Samuel 10:17-21.

Don't miss the not-so-subtle jab that Samuel makes at Israel for their sinful choice to reject the Lord as their king.

- In what way do we see grace in what Samuel says here? (i.e. it is a last-ditch option to repent for Israel; it is God clearly communicating his word even to sinful people who have rejected him).

Read 1 Samuel 10:20-24.

LEADER'S INSIGHT: Help your group see how this passage parallels Joshua 7, where Joshua is following the Lord's leadership to ferret out the sin in the camp after Israel's defeat at Ai. In that instance, God is revealing sin. The methodology used here is intentional to demonstrate that Israel had sinned in rejecting God as their king. Also, the location is intentional. It was at Mizpah where Samuel had seen Israel repent earlier in his ministry (1 Sam 7:5-17). Everything Samuel does here is designed to call Israel to repentance.

In verse 24, after they have retrieved a hiding and cowardly Saul, Samuel says, "Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people."

- This scene is so picturesque. At the climactic moment, Samuel announces, "And now, the winner is..... Saul, son of Kish." (cymbals clap) "Saul, son of Kish." (no movement in the crowd.) "Saul? Son of Kish?" (heads looking around. People wondering where in the world Saul has gotten off to.) After a search through the luggage, they find Saul hiding. Samuel, choking back a laugh, says, "OK. Here's your king. (under his breath – hope you are happy.)"

In what ways does Saul's hiding foreshadow how he will lead in the future?

What does this teach us about personally "running from God"?

Read 1 Samuel 10:25-27.

Despite what a horrible king Saul would become and the inauspicious start his rule had, it was still wrong for people to disrespect him as they did in verse 27.

- How do you typically respond when others disrespect you?
- What can we learn from Saul's response (or lack thereof)?



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Session Eleven: Saul Defeats the Ammonites

1 Samuel 11:1-15

ICEBREAKER: What makes you angry?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 11:1-15. You may need to back up and give the context of 1 Samuel 9 so that people can understand where you are picking up. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life. Begin to share this responsibility with other group members!

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

After the 9/11 attacks on the United States, Bill Clinton was quoted as saying that the world would never know how good of a president he could have been. The insinuation of his comment was that he never faced a trial of the magnitude President George W. Bush was facing after 9/11. Trials provide opportunity for leadership to shine. Without trials, leadership can be understated.

In tonight's text, we see Saul rising to the level of leadership that his first crisis mandates. After being anointed as king, he went home (1 Sam. 10:26) to Gibeah. There seems to be no formal cabinet, no formal leadership, or no other things one might expect from a ruler. Instead, young Saul just goes home. God provides an opportunity for him to shine through Nahash the Ammonite.

Do you think most people normally view trials as opportunities? Why or why not?

Read 1 Samuel 11:1-4.

LEADER'S INSIGHT: According to Jewish historian, Josephus, Nahash the Ammonite king had reduced the Transjordan Israelites to slavery. In what might be the lousiest proposed deal of all time, he offered to gouge out their right eyes in exchange for a treaty. According to Josephus, warriors of that day fought in formation with interlocked shields, so that the left eye was covered by the shield. By gouging out the right eye, Nahash rendered them unfit for battle, though still eligible for slave labor.⁴¹

Why do you think Samuel is recapping the events that led to Israel choosing a king for themselves?

- Answers may include the fact that Samuel had cautioned Israel against rejecting God as their king, and that having a king was contrary to his advice.

⁴¹Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012), 170-71.



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- Follow up these answers by asking “But *why* did Samuel remind them of these facts?”
- Help your group see that Samuel is vindicating himself against the actions and activities of an unrighteous people.

In verse 3, Samuel notes that he had not defrauded anyone of anything. Why would this be important?

- What happens when spiritual leaders lose their integrity?
- How can we protect our spiritual leaders?
- You may want to stop and pray over the pastors, elders, and deacons at Crossroads.

Read 1 Samuel 12:6-10.

Why is Samuel reminding the people of Israel’s history?

- What is the significance of the phrase “but they forgot their God” in verse 9?
- In what ways do we “forget” God today?

How can reminding ourselves of our own spiritual history encourage us (and others)?

- Bro. Rob wants to encourage everyone to read good Christian biographies.⁴² These books will help you see how faith carried those who went before us. Below is a list of five great biographies:
 - *Through Gates of Splendor* by Elisabeth Elliott
 - *Spurgeon* by Arnold Dallimore
 - *George Whitefield* by Arnold Dallimore
 - *James Pettigru Boyce* by Thomas Nettles
 - *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* by George Marsden

Read 1 Samuel 12:11-13.

What are your thoughts on Samuel’s words in verse 13?

Read 1 Samuel 12:14-15.

What do these ver

⁴²John Piper offers this fantastic article: “Brothers, Read Christian Biography” found at <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/brothers-read-christian-biography>



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Session Twelve: Samuel's Farewell Address

1 Samuel 12:1-25

ICEBREAKER: What/who do you think of when I say “reluctant leader”?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 10:1-27. You may need to back up and give the context of 1 Samuel 9 so that people can understand where you are picking up. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life. Begin to share this responsibility with other group members!

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

Read 1 Samuel 12:1-5.

Why do you think Samuel is recapping the events that led to Israel choosing a king for themselves?

- Answers may include the fact that Samuel had cautioned Israel against rejecting God as their king, and that having a king was contrary to his advice.
- Follow up these answers by asking “But *why* did Samuel remind them of these facts?”
- Help your group see that Samuel is vindicating himself against the actions and activities of an unrighteous people.

In verse 3, Samuel notes that he had not defrauded anyone of anything. Why would this be important?

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Why is Samuel reminding the people of Israel's history?

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- *George Whitefield* by Arnold Dallimore
- *James Pettigru Boyce* by Thomas Nettles
- *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* by George Marsden

Read 1 Samuel 12:11-13.

What are your thoughts on Samuel's words in verse 13?

Read 1 Samuel 12:14-15.

What do these verses teach us about the choices we make?

Have someone read Galatians 6:7-8. In your experience, is this verse true?

LEADER'S INSIGHT: Samuel's comments in v. 14-15 are actually very encouraging. Even though Israel had rejected God as their king, they still had the opportunity to humble themselves before God and seek Him. If they did that, God, in his grace, would forgive them. But notice how thorough and definitive the language Samuel uses is: they must ear the Lord, they must serve and obey his voice, they must not rebel against his commandments, and they must follow the Lord and obey the voice of the Lord. God didn't leave any room for loopholes.⁴⁴

Verse 15 talks about "the hand of the Lord" being against us. What does that look like today?

Read 1 Samuel 12:16-18.

Why do you think the Lord does the miracle of rain and thunder?

Read 1 Samuel 12:19-25.

Notice that the people spoke to Samuel, referring to the Lord as "your God," and that instead of going to the Lord in prayer themselves, they asked him to "pray for your servants to the Lord" (v. 19).⁴⁵

Why do you think they refer to God as "your" God?

In verse 21, he talks about turning aside to "empty things." What are some empty things to which we turn aside?

What does verse 24 teach us?

⁴⁴Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012), 186.

⁴⁵Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012), 190.



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What does verse 25 teach us?

Session Thirteen: Excuse Makers Beware

1 Samuel 12:1-46

ICEBREAKER: [In honor of summer] What is your favorite way to eat corn?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 13:1-14. You may need to back up and give the context of 1 Samuel 9 so that people can understand where you are picking up. Bring the story to life using vivid descriptions. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life. Begin to share this responsibility with other group members!

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

Define “excuse”.

Does anyone have a testimony they can share of working with an excuse maker (gently protect the “innocent” by changing names)?

What are the challenges of being joined together with an excuse maker?

Read 1 Samuel 13:1-4. This is the background for our emphasis tonight.

Read verse 10. Who is sovereign over this timing?

Read verse 11 carefully. Who does Saul blame?

What should Saul have done?

Read verse 12. When Saul says, “So I forced myself...”, what is he saying?

What are some ways we typically rationalize our sins?

How can we help each other avoid this “rationalization” trap?

How do we argue with God about His timing? Why do you think we argue in this way?

Read v. 13-14. Sum up what you think Samuel is saying.

- Do you think Samuel, who thought having a king was a bad idea, felt vindicated by this turn of events?

How should we respond when we know we’ve made excuses for our poor behavior?

Close by reading 1 John 1:9 and applying it to the discussion.



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Session Thirteen: Uh-oh, Saul

1 Samuel 13:1-23

ICEBREAKER: On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being “awful” and 10 being “perfect”), how patient are you?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 13:1-23. Where you can, tie the story to modern day correlations or to your own personal life. Begin to share this responsibility with other group members!

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

Recap 1 Samuel 13:1-7.

- Saul had been the king for a brief period of time (v. 1).
- Saul had an army of 3,000 men (v. 2).
- Saul won a victory against the hated Philistines (v. 3).
- Other Israelites came and joined in once they saw that Saul and Jonathan were victorious. (v. 4).
- The Philistines responded with an army of 30,000 chariots and 6,000 cavalry and troops (v. 5).
- When the Israelites realized that the odds were against them, they hid like roaches when the lights are turned on (v. 6).
- Some Israelites even crossed the Jordan, running for their lives. The ones who stayed behind to fight were “trembling” (v. 7).

It is against this backdrop that we see what one, in one sense is the end of Saul’s reign because he disobeyed God (spiritual vision), but in another sense is the “high-water mark of Saul’s entire life and reign” (worldly vision).⁴⁶

Richard Phillips writes, “The key to understanding this chapter is to realize that, intentionally or not, Saul had finally gotten around to obeying Samuel’s instructions, given to him at the time of his anointing a year earlier.”⁴⁷

- Read 1 Samuel 10:7-8.

So let’s see what happens to Saul and to Israel.

Read 1 Samuel 13:8-10.

- How hard must it have been for Samuel to wait?
 - Do you find it hard to wait on the Lord?

⁴⁶Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 198.

⁴⁷Phillips, 196.



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- What are some bad ways that we respond while waiting on God?
- How should we respond to the Lord when waiting on him?
- Why is Saul panicking?
 - Highlight that Saul's focus on the men leaving him was a lack of faith in God. God didn't need an army to win a victory!
 - "Objectively, it was more important for God to be worshiped properly than for Israel to survive its war."⁴⁸
- Why was it wrong for Saul to perform Samuel's duty?

Read 1 Samuel 13:11-12.

- Ask people to go through and identify the language of excuse that Saul uses.
 - Who all does Saul blame?
 - Does he take responsibility?
- How do we respond to people who exhibit an excuse-making attitude?
 - How does God respond to us when we have this kind of attitude?

Read 1 Samuel 13:13-15.

- Why is Samuel so upset?
- What is the implication of verse 14? (that Saul was not a man after God's own heart.)
- How important is it that we daily examine our hearts?
- What are some things you have learned about examining your own heart?
- How can a group like this one be an aid in the work of examining our own hearts?

Read 1 Samuel 13:16-23.

- So Israel is off to war. And now they have a leader who is not under the blessing of God.
- What is the correlation for us today as Americans?
- Saul wins battles from this point out. He does so, not under the blessing of God, but in the power of his own strength. Ultimately, his life is marked by depression, paranoia, and a schizophrenic insanity. All of this stems from this moment of disobedience to God. We must remember that, apart from the grace of God, we are but inches away from our "moment of disobedience." Challenge your group to strive to live holy before God! Our lifestyle matters. We aren't saved by works, but our works reveal the grace of God in each of us.

⁴⁸Phillips, 201.



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Session Fourteen: Words Spoken Thoughtlessly

1 Samuel 14:1-46

ICEBREAKER: Who was your best friend in your middle school years? Why were they your best friend?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 14:1-46.

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

Today's passage introduces us to one of the most beautiful characters in all of Scripture – Jonathan, the son of King Saul and the closest friend of king David.

Recap 1 Samuel 14:1-23.

- Jonathan and his armor bearer steal away from the camp of Saul to try to sabotage the Philistines (v. 1).
- Saul has replaced Samuel with an imposter – Ahijah. Ahijah is a descendant of Phineas, the wicked son of Eli. Eli's sons had been rejected as priests. Now Saul has turned to them since Samuel has pronounced judgment on his household. One author notes, "His own royal glory gone, where else would we expect Saul to be than with a relative of 'Glory gone'?"⁴⁹ (v. 3).
- Saul's current army consists of 600 men (v. 2)
- Jonathan must traverse difficult terrain. The 2 crags are named. Bozez means "slippery." Seneh means "thorny."
- Read verse 7. What kind of man is this unnamed armor bearer?
- Jonathan and the armor bearer come up with a plan to test the direction of God. They would show themselves to the Philistines. If the Philistines hailed them to come near, they would see this as God's hand leading them into battle. If the Philistines tell them to wait on them to come down to Jonathan, they will see this as a sign that God is not leading them to battle (v. 8-12).
- Read v. 12. What do you think the Philistines meant when they said, "we will show you a thing"?
- The sign was affirmative and they crawled up the treacherous terrain (v. 13).
- The Lord was with Jonathan and his armor bearer. They killed about 20 men and set off a great panic in the camp (v. 14-15).
- ASK: Even though Jonathan and the shield bearer were faithful, could they cause the earth to quake (v. 15)? Who caused the earth to quake? What does this tell us about God's activity in all of this?
- When the camp of Saul became aware of the tumult in the Philistine camp, they drew their swords and went into the battle (v. 16-20).

⁴⁹Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 2009.



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- The confusion was so great in the Philistine camp that they are drawing their swords on each other – a signature move of God in the OT (v. 20).
- Some Jews who had been traitors turned back to the side of Israel to fight (v. 21).
- Some Jews who had been hiding in caves and foothills because they were scared rallied to the battle (v. 22).
- READ v. 23. “So the Lord saved Israel that day.” Credit is not given to Jonathan. Nor should it be. He was faithful. God used his faithfulness. But God is the one who deserves and gets the credit for the victory.
 - What can we learn about God and his glory from this episode?
 - What can we learn about courage from Jonathan in this episode?

So the next part of the lesson is the part that really convicts us. It has to do with the words that we speak (or text or post to FaceBook).

Have you ever spoken (texted/posted) and almost immediately wished you hadn't done so?

- Herm Edwards, former coach and player for the NFL, gives a great testimony to this to NFL rookies at a training seminar. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H27I-de9OjI>
- DON'T PRESS SEND!!! “When you press it, you can't take it back. It's out there.”

Saul is a great example of speaking rash words in the remainder of our text.

Read 1 Samuel 14:24:25.

- There is debate over why Saul made this command. Some say it was to force the Israelites to pursue the Philistines without being distracted by loot.
- More likely, Saul is interested in preserving the choice booty for himself.

Read 1 Samuel 14:26-30.

- Jonathan's “eyes becoming bright” is a sign of his physical energy coming back to him – like a marathon runner eating a “goo pack.”
- “As a spiritual leader, Saul erred by requiring more of God's people than God himself had asked, which Saul did by demanding a fast in the midst of battle.”⁵⁰ Adding to God's Word always leads to legalism. The Pharisees did this in profound ways.
- What are some areas where the modern church adds to God's word?
- Why do you think we are prone to do this?
- What are the dangers of adding to God's Word?
- When Jonathan said, “My father has troubled the land” (v. 29), was this an act of rebellion? Discuss.

Read 1 Samuel 14:31-35.

- This distance from Michmash to Aijalon was nearly 20 miles over rugged terrain.⁵¹

⁵⁰Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillippsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012), 221.

⁵¹Phillips, 222.



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- Notice that everybody seems to be disregarding Saul's command not to eat.

Read 1 Samuel 14:36-37.

- The priests politely interrupt Saul's night-time raid plan – after a called fast on the men who marched nearly 20 miles over rugged terrain.
- Why do you think God didn't answer Saul?

Read 1 Samuel 14:38-42.

- Explain what is happening here:
 - Saul is convinced the Lord isn't answering because of sin in the camp.
 - Saul casts lots to see who has broken the rules.
 - He cast lots between the royal family and the rest of Israel. The royal family is chosen.
 - He cast lots between himself and Jonathan. Jonathan is chosen.
 - Jonathan must die.

Read 1 Samuel 14:43-46.

- How would you describe Jonathan's attitude?
- Look at Israel – the country who blows it sooooo often. What do you think of the stance they take here?



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Session Fifteen: To Obey is Better

1 Samuel 14:47-15:35

ICEBREAKER: [Consider using tonight’s icebreaker as part of your discussion time]. How would you define “divine judgment”?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 14:47-15:35.

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

Today’s passage introduces us to an uncomfortable topic – divine judgment. We see the importance of obedience and the high cost of disobedience.

Read 1 Samuel 15:1-3.

- In order to remind ourselves of the role Amalek played in Israel’s history, have someone read the following passages:
 - Exodus 17:8-16
 - Deuteronomy 25:17-19

How does God’s command to Israel in verse 3 make you feel?

ASK: Does the warfare we see between Israel and Amalek have a modern day carryover? (See Ephesians 6:10-18.)

If God’s Old Testament judgment frightens us, look at the judgment that is to come in Revelation! God is not a different God in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Sometimes people say that God in the OT was wrathful, but God in the NT is loving. To have this view is to distort the true meaning of the cross. God’s wrath was poured out on sin in the NT period on the cross! Jesus bore the wrath of God so that we don’t have to!

Read 1 Samuel 15:4-9.

In verse 6, Saul shows mercy on the Kenites. Does anyone know anything about the Kenites? (Encourage them to look at their study notes in their Bibles.)

- The Kenites were the descendents of Moses’ father-in-law.
- Read Judges 4:11.
- Read Exodus 18:1-2.

How do we see the faithfulness of God in this verse?

- How does that make you feel toward your Lord?



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Saul seems to be doing the will of God here. However, even in “doing the will of God,” he manages to bungle it. Richard Phillips writes, “How typical of Saul that even in doing the will of the Lord, he managed to self-willfully disobey.”⁵²

What are some examples in how we can “do the will of God” (like the Pharisees in the NT) and still disobey him?

Why do you think Saul was really holding back the best spoils of war?

How do we hold back our best from God?

- When I was a youth pastor, every time someone got a new living room suit, they would “donate” their old, nasty couch to the youth group. The couch that wasn’t good enough for their living room anymore was good enough for the ministry of the Lord! No one EVER just went out and bought a new couch for the youth group because the ministry needed it. I said something about it one day when I was filling in the pulpit for my absentee pastor. Coincidentally, no more old couches were donated.
- Can you think of other illustrations of this?

Read 1 Samuel 15:10-16.

In verses 10 and 11 we see God “repent” or “regret” his actions in choosing Saul. Twenty nine times we have similar statements in the Old Testament.

- There is a view in modern theology called “Open Theism.”⁵³ This view claims that God doesn’t actually know the future until it happens since events do not exist until created by human action.
- Is this the best understanding of this passage (NO!).
- Read Isaiah 46:9-10.
 - This passage indicates God’s real response.
 - This passage indicates God’s real emotional experience.
 - This expression elicits a response from us. God is making a strong point.
- The best commentary on 1 Samuel 15:10-11 is 1 Samuel 15:29 (Read!).

In verse 15, who does Saul blame for his sin?

- Can someone who is truly repentant blame others?
- Why do we blame others so often?
- Who do you blame the most?

Read 1 Samuel 15:17-23.

What does verse 19 teach us about Saul?

⁵²Richard Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 233.

⁵³For more info and a brief article see: <https://carm.org/what-is-open-theism>



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What does verse 20-21 teach us about Saul?

How would you define rebellion?

- What does spiritual rebellion look like in our lives today?

Read 1 Samuel 15:24-31.

Richard Phillips offers five reasons why Saul's repentance isn't genuine.

- First, we can see that neither Samuel nor the Lord seemed to accept it as genuine.
- Second, Saul did not confess his sin until Samuel's insistent accusations left him with little choice but to admit his guilt.
- Third, Saul seems to be more concerned about Samuel's opinion than the Lord's opinion.
- Fourth, even as Saul confesses, he makes excuses for his conduct (1 Sam. 15:24).
- Fifth, Saul lacks concern for God's offended honor and the practical harm of his sins, but focuses only on his own restoration to honor and authority.

This passage serves as a warning that we should not flippantly enter into repentance.



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Session Sixteen: After God's Own Heart

1 Samuel 16:1-23

ICEBREAKER: Describe what a great leader looks like.

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 16:1-23. Help the narrative to come alive for your group.

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

Today's passage sees us move away from Saul towards David. First Samuel turns a corner here, beginning to focus more on the Davidic line than on Samuel and Saul.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-5.

In verse 5 we see God questioning Samuel and his grief over Saul. Why do you think Samuel was grieved over Saul?

- When we grieve over people, what does that indicate about us? About them?
- These fascinating quotes stir us to think about godly grief:
 - "One insight we may glean from this episode is that the first sign that God intends to act out of his mercy is that he places a burden on his people for the distress of their times."⁵⁴ – Richard Phillips
 - "Are we burdened and distressed over the condition of the church today? Until we are conscious of such a burden we need not scan the horizon for the thunderclouds of God's mercy. They only break upon the heads of those who feel the burden of the times."⁵⁵ - Roger Ellsworth
- Do we have a proper "grief" over the state of the modern church? What does it say about us if we lack a compassionate grief?

God calls Samuel to snap out of his grief (v. 1). This reproof reminds us that while grief is natural and proper at times, it should never be indulged with unbelief or a fear of man.

Read 1 Samuel 16:6-13.

- We live in a day where charisma is prized over character. Can anyone give an example of that?
- Read v. 7 again. Do most people spend more time cultivating their heart or their outward appearance?
 - How do we cultivate our heart?
- When churches look for leaders, what should they look for?

⁵⁴Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 257.

⁵⁵Roger Ellsworth, *The Shepherd King* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1998), 17-18.



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- Read v. 11-13 again. Dale Ralph Davis says that what happens here is “the stuff songs are made of.”⁵⁶ Along comes David, with his ruddy complexion and his beautiful eyes – youngest of the sons of Jesse and so insignificant that Jesse hadn’t even called him in from the field to be considered by Samuel.
- This shows us how God loves to elevate his choice servants from lowly places.
- Have someone read 1 Cor. 1:26-27.
- Verse 13 tells us that the Holy Spirit rushed on David. Where we see the Holy Spirit, we see God’s anointing for a special purpose. Read Ephesians 1:13-14. What does it mean to you that God has sealed you with the Holy Spirit?
- Why do we think and talk so little on the amazing gift of the Holy Spirit to believers?

Read 1 Samuel 16:14-23.

Verse 14 is one of the most difficult verses in the Bible to understand. We can see two things clearly:

- First, God’s rejection of Saul meant that the “Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul.”
 - We know that Saul had received the Spirit at the time of his anointing (10:10). This does not mean that Saul had been born again to a saving faith, but rather that God’s Spirit was providing him with supernatural equipping for the calling that God had given him.⁵⁷
- Second, God also punished Saul for the sins by causing “a harmful spirit from the Lord” to torment him (v. 14).
 - Phillips writes on this: “The spirit – presumably an angel – was not himself evil, but rather he was sent by the Lord to bring harm upon King Saul. To some, this may not seem to resolve much of the difficulty, since whether the spirit was himself evil or not, we still have God harming someone, despite the Bible’s teaching that ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8). The answer is that this spirit of harm was sent by the Lord as an act of judgment on Saul’s sin.”⁵⁸

Read verse 18. What do you make of David’s reputation among the servants of Saul?

- Might there have been some trepidation on the part of Jesse and David when David was summoned to Saul’s court?
- What does it say of David that his worshipful music “refreshed” Saul and “the harmful spirit departed him” (v. 23)?

Close by praying that we would be people who have the character and heart-attitude that God would look upon us with favor.

⁵⁶Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart* (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2000), 139.

⁵⁷Phillips, *1 Samuel*, 268.

⁵⁸Phillips, *1 Samuel*, 270-71.



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Session Seventeen: Knocking Down the Bully

1 Samuel 17:1-58

ICEBREAKER: Who was the bully in your school growing up?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 17:1-58. A vivid recapping of the narrative will help the story come alive. Tonight is a long text so you will have to move quickly.

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

Today's passage is perhaps *the* most familiar passage in the Old Testament. It is cited in everything from sporting events to political debates. David's defeat of Goliath is part of narrative of any underdog story. Tonight we are trying to see this narrative through fresh eyes – a real challenge because of its familiarity.

A few facts about the chapter:

- This account is the longest of all the accounts in Samuel.
- It includes more quotations than any other (21).
- It features the longest and most vivid speech from one of Israel's enemies.
- Goliath stands about 9 feet 6 inches tall. By contrast, the tallest man on the planet today is Sultan Kosen from Turkey. The part-time farmer stands at 8 feet 3 inches, the first man over 8 ft to be measured by Guinness World Records in over 20 years.⁵⁹
- There is no other human record of a man as tall as Goliath!
- In 1940 an Illinois man named Robert Wadlow was verified to be 8 feet 11 inches tall – 7 inches shorter than Goliath!⁶⁰

Read 1 Samuel 17:1-11

- What do you think it would have been like to be in the Israelite army as Goliath taunted them?
- What was intimidating about Goliath?
 - Goliath's spear must have been HUGE. It has a 15 pound iron point! (1 Sam. 17:6-7).
 - Goliath's coat of mail weighted 5,000 shekels – about 126 pounds!
- Who would have been the natural choice to face Goliath?
 - Have someone read 1 Samuel 8:20. Instead, look at how Saul was “dismayed and greatly afraid” (17:11).

Read 1 Samuel 17:12-18.

- What was David? (a shepherd)

⁵⁹<http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/tallest-man-living>

⁶⁰Richard Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 281.



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- What do shepherds do?
- Why did David's father send David to the battlefield (v. 17-18)?
- Israel seems to have had a standard of only 20 year olds and up going to war (see Numbers 1:3,20). David would not have been at the battle lines because of his youth.

Read 1 Samuel 17:19-30.

- As Providence would have it, David shows up as Goliath is giving his daily taunt to the Israelites (v. 23).
 - I love how Chuck Swindoll captures the moment:

Picture the moment. David is standing there talking to his three brothers, when all of a sudden he hears this loud cry from across the ravine. And suddenly everyone around him is rushing to the rear and climbing in their tents – “when all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from him and were greatly afraid” (17:24)

Remember, David has never seen this giant from Gath or heard his challenge. Suddenly he's standing there alone as everyone around him runs for cover! At least that's the way I read it.

He looks across the battlefield, and he see this giant of a guy, encased in armor, shouting out threats and defiance and cursing the God of Israel. And that made David livid!

No one talks that way about the God of Israel, he thought. So why is everybody running away?

Remember now, this is the forty-first day the Israelites have encountered Goliath . . . but this is the first time it's happened to David.⁶¹

- Roger Ellsworth paraphrases Goliath's taunt this way. “Am I not a pagan, God-hating Philistine? Then why won't any of your men of ‘the living God’ fight me? You must not really believe in him at all! In fact, you must believe that a nine-foot warrior is actually stronger than your ‘living God’ when it comes to real battle.”⁶²
- If a “David” were to respond to a “Goliath today the way David does in v. 26, what would we say about them? Would we call them immature? Might we say they lack understanding of the complexity of the issue?
- If you were in Eliab's shoes, how do you think you might have responded?

Read 1 Samuel 17:31-40.

- What “qualifications” did David list for fighting Goliath?
 - How silly do those qualifications sound to us today?
 - Do you think they were less ludicrous back then?
 - Why do you think Saul agreed to this?
- Why was David so confident that he could defeat Goliath? (v. 37)

⁶¹Charles R. Swindoll, *David: A Story of Passion and Destiny* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing, 1997), 40-41.

⁶²Roger Ellsworth, *The Shepherd King: Learning from the Life of David* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1998), 30.



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- “As I see it, David was blinking and thinking, *What giant? The only giant in my life is God. That’s a dwarf over there, Saul.*”⁶³
- Why didn’t David wear Saul’s armor? What can we learn from this?
- A Word on the “Five Stones”:
 - People frequently ask why David chose 5 smooth stones (v. 40). Didn’t he only need one stone?
 - The responses to this question are varied.
 - Some say he got 5 stones because of doubt. I think verse 37 destroys this theory.
 - Some say he got 5 stones because of Goliath’s family (4 brothers). This theory stems from 2 Samuel 21:15-22 where four very large Philistines who were related to Goliath in some way are listed: Ishbi-benob, Saph, Goliath, and an unnamed giant with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. However, we must recognize that 1 Samuel 17 does not suggest that David knew about Goliath’s brothers or that he believed he would have to fight the whole family. Also, he had just arrived on the scene and would have been pretty ignorant of the circumstances.
 - Some say David was an experienced shepherd and understood the value of preparedness. Others may have charged him after Goliath’s defeat.
 - However we respond to the inclusion of the “5 stones” detail, we must hold that view loosely because Scripture isn’t very clear one way or another.

Read 1 Samuel 17:41-49.

- How great is David’s speech in v. 45-47!?!?
- Do you think David faced personal feelings of fear in this moment?
- What can we learn from him in this situation?

CLOSER:

Most Bible lessons on 1 Samuel 17 emphasize how we can defeat the giants in our lives. Those lessons place us in the shoes of David and characterize our enemies as Goliath. While this can be helpful, I don’t believe it is the best understanding of this passage. In this narrative, we are truly the Israelites cowering on the sidelines, intimidated and defeated. David is best understood as Christ who goes on the field of battle to defeat our sin. Jesus wins the victory for us – a victory that we cannot win! Praise God for the cross!

⁶³Swindoll, *David*, 43.



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Session Eighteen: You Got a Friend in Me

1 Samuel 18:1-30

ICEBREAKER: What is your favorite Pixar movie?

STORY RECAP: In a very conversational way, tell the story of 1 Samuel 18:1-30. A vivid recapping of the narrative will help the story come alive.

- When the story is told, ask:
 - Did we leave anything out?
 - Did we add any extra details?
 - Congratulate whoever told the story this week! Use this time to build them up!

Today's passage focuses us in on the wonderful friendship that exists between David and Johnathan. These two are an unlikely duo – just like Woody and Buzz in *A Toy Story*.

Tech Moment: You may want to show the following clip.

<https://youtu.be/LKTU4AarZ7A?list=RDLKTU4AarZ7A>

What characteristics make a good friend?

