

# Explore the Bible.®

Summer 2016 > *Eric Geiger, General Editor*



# 1 Samuel

# SHARING THE GOSPEL

The word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel.



**1. God rules.** The Bible tells us God created everything, including you and me, and He is in charge of everything. (See Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; and Colossians 1:16-17.)

**2. We sinned.** Since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (See Romans 3:23.) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God’s punishment of death. (See Romans 6:23.)

**3. God provided.** God sent His Son Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. (See John 3:16 and Ephesians 2:8-9.)

**4. Jesus gives.** Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God’s family for eternity. This is the best gift ever. (See Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; and 1 Peter 3:18.)

**5. We respond.** We can respond to Jesus. The ABCs of Becoming a Christian is a simple tool that helps us remember how to respond when prompted by the Holy Spirit to receive the gift Jesus offers.

Admit to God that you are a sinner. The first people God created chose to sin and disobey God. Ever since then, all people have chosen to sin and disobey. (See Romans 3:23.) Tell God you messed up and you are sorry for doing your own thing and turning away from Him through your thoughts, words, and actions. Repent, and turn away from your sin. (See Acts 3:19 and 1 John 1:9.) Repenting doesn’t just mean turning from doing bad things to doing good things. It means turning from sin and even from your own good works, and turning to Jesus, trusting only in Him to save you.

Believe that Jesus is God’s Son and accept God’s gift of forgiveness from sin. You must believe that only Jesus can save you, and you cannot save yourself from your sin problem—not even by praying to God, going to church, or reading your Bible. Your faith or your trust is only in Jesus and what He did for you through His life, death, and resurrection. (See Acts 16:31; Acts 4:12; John 14:6; and Ephesians 2:8-9.)

Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Tell God and tell others what you believe. If Jesus is your Savior, you are trusting only in Him to save you. Jesus is also Lord, which means He is in charge of your life. You can start following Him and doing what He says in the Bible. You are born again into a new life and can look forward to being with God forever. (See Romans 10:9-10,13.)

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s a blessing from God. <sup>8</sup> But if  
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the saints—and you continue  
<sup>11</sup> Now we want each of you to  
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hope, <sup>12</sup> so that you won't bec  
tators of those who inherit the



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\*Evangelistic Emphasis

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# A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR



The Bible is an amazing gift from our awesome God. In it, He reveals Himself and His glory for us to witness. I'm excited that you are joining in for a journey through the Book of 1 Samuel. It is epic and beautiful.

In 1 Samuel we will see the story of God's people. As we do, we see the greatness of our God over His people. He is worthy. He is holy. He is the God above all gods, the King above all kings. As your group or class discusses this book, I want to encourage you to see the overarching theme of God's greatness as the umbrella that is above each story.

So many times, life takes its toll on us and we are prone to take our eyes off God and His great sufficiency for us. Because of this, your discussions and emphasis on God's greatness and the victories that He wins His people will be a great reminder and encouragement for those you are serving. In 1 Samuel, God's greatness will be a constant background as you discuss stories of deliverance, victory, forgiveness, and worship.

As you study the text in its context and seek to obey it in your context, I know the Lord will encourage you and challenge you. Enjoy the journey through 1 Samuel! Our God is still great, is still caring for His people, and is still the King above all kings.

In Christ,

**Eric Geiger**



*Eric Geiger serves as Vice President of the Resources Division at LifeWay Christian Resources. Eric received his doctorate in leadership and church ministry from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has authored and co-authored several books, including *Creature of the Word* and the best selling church leadership book, *Simple Church*. He also serves as the senior pastor of ClearView Baptist Church in Franklin, Tennessee. Eric is married to Kaye, and they have two daughters: Eden and Evie.*



# TWO WAYS TO USE QUICKSOURCE

## »» AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE EXPLORE THE BIBLE LEADER GUIDE

1. After completing your study using the commentary provided in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*, consult the Exploring Key Words section and the Talking Points page for additional insight or as a review.
2. After creating your initial plans for guiding the group time using the suggestions included in the Leader Guide, supplement and refine your plan using the ideas found in *QuickSource*. You will also want to consult the Explore the Bible blog ([Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible/Adults/LeaderExtras](http://Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible/Adults/LeaderExtras)) or Explore the Bible MinistryGrid page ([MinistryGrid.com/Web/ExploreTheBible](http://MinistryGrid.com/Web/ExploreTheBible)) for additional ideas.

## »» AS YOUR PRIMARY RESOURCE FOR PREPARING TO LEAD A SMALL BIBLE STUDY GROUP

### 1. Read and study the core passage.

Use Exploring Key Words on the first page of the session content to gain an understanding of the passage. Consult a study Bible like the HCSB Study Bible (also available online at [myWSB.com](http://myWSB.com)) and a Bible commentary like the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* (available at [LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible](http://LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible) in both print and digital formats) to gain additional insight into the passage.

### 2. Review the outline provided on the Talking Points page (page 2 of each session).

Record ideas and insights gleaned from your personal study time. Note: You may want to make a photocopy of the Talking Points page so you can use *QuickSource* again in the future.

### 3. Review the questions on the Discussion Plan page (page 3 of each session).

Identify the questions you believe would work best with the group you are leading. Reword the selected questions to reflect your personality and the personality of the group. Record the reworded questions on the Talking Points page (or the photocopy you made of the page) next to the point related to the question. Remember to arrange the questions so that you are leading the group to a conclusion or action.

#### **4. Consider ways of using the Object Lesson idea (page 4 of each session).**

Brainstorm other ideas sparked by the object lesson suggestion.

#### **5. Read the Dig Deeper feature (page 4 of each session).**

Add insights gained from this page to the Talking Points page.

#### **6. Use the *Personal Study Guide* (PSG).**

Scan a copy of the *Personal Study Guide* (PSG), looking for additional questions and the Bible skill feature. Consider ways of incorporating the Bible skill into the session, recording your ideas on the Talking Points page. Record additional questions from the PSG on the Talking Points page as well.

#### **7. Review and refine.**

Consult the Explore the Bible blog ([Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible/Adults/LeaderExtras](http://Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible/Adults/LeaderExtras)) or Explore the Bible Ministry Grid ([MinistryGrid.com/Web/ExploreTheBible](http://MinistryGrid.com/Web/ExploreTheBible)) for additional ideas.

#### **8. Arrive early.**

The group time starts when the first person arrives. Make sure you are that person so you can set the tone and direction for the group Bible study time.

#### **9. Lead the group in a time of Bible study.**

Carry the Talking Points page into the class, using this page as your guide for leading the group.



# INTRODUCTION TO 1 SAMUEL

## »» BACKGROUND

The Hebrew Bible contains the same books as the English Old Testament, but they are arranged in a different order. As in our Bibles, the Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy) comes first. Then comes a section called the Prophets. It has two parts: the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings) and the Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets). After this comes the Writings, which has everything else (notice that Ruth is in the Writings; it does not follow Judges, as in the English Bible).

The collection called Former Prophets reflect the fact that the books from Joshua to 2 Kings form a continuous historical narrative. Scholars sometimes call these six books the Primary History. The books describe the conquest (Joshua), Israel as a confederation loosely governed by judges (Judges), the transition to monarchy, the reign of Saul, and the rise of David (1 Samuel), the reign of David (2 Samuel), Solomon's reign, the splitting of the kingdom, and the history of the two kingdoms until each was destroyed (1 and 2 Kings).

First Samuel tells of God's faithfulness to Israel during a time of upheaval. The era of the judges is ending, and the people clamor for a monarchy without really understanding how that would work or who would be king. The Philistines threaten Israel's very existence. Monarchy has a false start under Saul, but a young shepherd kills a great Philistine warrior and through severe testing learns to be a leader and a king.

## »» OVERVIEW

First Samuel begins by telling how Samuel, the last and greatest of the judges, was born as an answer to prayer. It tells how he delivered Israel from the Philistines but also how the people demanded a king despite the disapproval of both God and Samuel. It describes the heroic exploits and tragic disobedience of Saul, the first king. It then tells of the origin and valor of David, as well as of his persecution at the hands of the increasingly paranoid and bitter Saul. It concludes with the death of Saul and with the stage set for beginning of the dynasty of David.

## »» WRITER

First Samuel is anonymous; it never names an author. Some people think that the title implies that Samuel wrote it, but the Bible never suggests such a thing. Samuel dies before the end of 1 Samuel, and he was long dead during the events of 2 Samuel. In fact, the title reflects the fact that he was the first of the three great leaders of Israel: Samuel, Saul, and David. In the ancient world, a book's name often reflected something or someone at the beginning of the book. Sometimes the first line of a book was its title.

## »» DATE OF WRITING

First Samuel is one among the six volumes of the Primary History. The Primary History was obviously not finished until after the last event it describes, the fall of Jerusalem to

Babylon in about 586 B.C. But this does not mean that the Primary History was at this time written from scratch. The author employed many sources, and most of these would have been written much earlier. First and Second Kings explicitly refer to sources (see 2 Kings 1:18, for example).

It may be that the stories behind 1 Samuel were compiled by scribes in the court of David and Solomon. These scribes in turn would have relied on earlier material, perhaps some of it written by Samuel. Thus, although we cannot say that Samuel wrote 1 and 2 Samuel, we can say that some of its earlier material may come from him. Similarly, although the Primary History was not finished until after the end of the monarchy, much of its material is from much earlier.

## ➤➤ PURPOSE

The whole of the Primary History tells the story of Israel, and in particular it describes how it was that this people, although in covenant with God, came to be conquered by a foreign nation and so lose their land and temple. The story begins gloriously with the conquest under Joshua, but it quickly degenerates during the time of the Judges. The exile is foreshadowed in 1 Samuel when the Philistines take away the Ark of the Covenant. But Israel has a second glorious era in the reigns of David and Solomon, after which it again declines and finally falls to Babylon. First Samuel is transitional, telling of how one age ended and another began.

## ➤➤ KEY THEMES

The transition from the loose confederation under the judges to a monarchy—First Samuel tells how Israel became a monarchy and also, to the surprise of many readers, it treats Israel's desire for a king as a sin against God.

***The story behind the covenant with David***—First Samuel explains why God rejected Saul's monarchy but made an eternal covenant with David. It shows what qualities and actions made David the man after God's own heart.

***The life of David***—The Old Testament gives far more attention to the biography of David than it gives to any other person. First Samuel begins the story, and 2 Samuel finishes it. As the king who firmly established the monarchy and turned Israel into a great nation, as the focus of the covenant with David, and as the fountainhead of the psalms, David is a towering figure in the Old Testament.

***Election and the will of God***—Although 1 Samuel plainly shows Saul's moral failings and thereby explains his fall from power, it does not whitewash David. God had, for His own reasons, chosen David.

***Devotion and loyalty***—David was loyal to God at all times, loyal to Saul even when fleeing from his insane wrath, and loyal to his subordinates. Jonathan alone matched David in this virtue. He gave steadfast friendship to David, and he died fighting alongside his father Saul even though he knew him to be in the wrong and deeply troubled.

# OUTLINE OF 1 SAMUEL

- I. Samuel's Birth (1:1–2:11)
- II. Samuel's Call (2:12–3:21)
- III. Samuel's Ministry (4:1–7:17)
- IV. Crying for a King (8:1–11:15)
- V. Samuel's Warning (12:1-25)
- VI. Saul's Rise and Rebellion (13:1–15:35)
- VII. David's Selection (16:1-23)
- VIII. David's Victory (17:1-58)
- IX. Saul's Conflict with David (18:1–26:25)
- X. Saul's End (27:1–31:13)

## SESSION 1

# ANSWERED!

## 1 SAMUEL 1:10-18,26-28

<sup>10</sup> Deeply hurt, **Hannah**<sup>a</sup> prayed to the LORD and wept with many tears. <sup>11</sup> Making a vow, she pleaded, “LORD of Hosts, if You will take notice of Your servant’s **affliction**,<sup>b</sup> remember and not forget me, and give Your servant a son, **I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life**,<sup>c</sup> and **his hair will never be cut**.”<sup>d</sup> <sup>12</sup> While she continued praying in the LORD’s presence, **Eli**<sup>e</sup> watched her lips. <sup>13</sup> Hannah was praying silently, and though her lips were moving, her voice could not be heard. Eli thought she was drunk <sup>14</sup> and scolded her, “How long are you going to be drunk? Get rid of your wine!” <sup>15</sup> “No, my lord,” Hannah replied. “I am a woman with a **broken heart**.<sup>f</sup> I haven’t had any wine or beer; I’ve been pouring out my heart before the LORD. <sup>16</sup> Don’t think of me as a wicked woman; I’ve been praying from the depth of my **anguish**<sup>g</sup> and **resentment**.”<sup>h</sup> <sup>17</sup> Eli responded, “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the petition you’ve requested from Him.” <sup>18</sup> “May your servant find favor with you,” she replied. Then Hannah went on her way; she ate and no longer looked despondent. ... <sup>26</sup> “Please, **my lord**,<sup>i</sup>” she said, “as sure as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. <sup>27</sup> **I prayed for this boy**,<sup>j</sup> and since the LORD gave me what I asked Him for, <sup>28</sup> **I now give the boy to the LORD**.<sup>k</sup> For as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD.” Then he bowed in worship to the LORD there.

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

**a** Personal name meaning “grace.” Hannah was the wife of Elkanah and mother of Samuel.

**b** “misery” (NIV); “sorrow” (NLT); “pain” (MSG)

**c** Hannah made a vow to the Lord, which involved a promise of a gift if God would intervene in her inability to have a son (see Gen. 28:20-22; Ps. 56:12; Ecc. 5:4-5).

**d** Long hair was a sign both of a warrior and the Nazirite vow (see Num. 6:5; Judg. 13:5). Samson also was under a Nazirite vow (see Judg. 13).

**e** Eli the priest was on duty at the entrance of the temple. The story of Eli can be found in 1 Samuel 1–4. According to 1 Samuel 4:18, Eli judged Israel for 40 years. However, because of the sinfulness of his two sons and Eli’s failure to effectively deal with the situation, his legacy was tainted (see 1 Sam. 2:27-36; 4:17-18).

**f** “a sorrowful spirit” (KJV); “oppressed in spirit” (NASB)

**g** The Hebrew word transliterated *siyach* can mean babbling, anxiety, or fear.

**h** The Hebrew word transliterated *ka’ac* means to be vexed but also carries the connotation of anger and grief.

**i** Hannah is referring to Eli with respect for his position as priest.

**j** Hannah’s prayer was answered with the birth of Samuel. After weaning her son, she delivered him to Eli to fulfill her vow, which demanded her great sacrifice.

**k** Hannah referred to the Nazirite vow that she made with the Lord before her son was born (see 1 Sam. 1:11).

### » HANNAH'S PRAYER (1 Sam. 1:10-11)

- Brokenhearted over her barrenness, Hannah prayed for a son and vowed to give the son to God as His servant.
- Note: Be sensitive to people who may have had difficulty conceiving. Explain that neither the text nor Hannah's prayer indicate that her barrenness was the result of any sin on her part.

### » ELI'S AFFIRMATION (1 Sam. 1:12-18)

- Eli observed Hannah praying and assumed her to be drunk.
- After Hannah explained her anguish and prayer, Eli encouraged Hannah by validating her prayer with a blessing.
- Hannah expressed trust in God to answer her prayer.

### » HANNAH'S PRESENTATION

(1 Sam. 1:26-28)

- After giving birth to a son, Hannah fulfilled her vow by presenting her son, Samuel, to Eli. Eli responded by worshiping God.
- Note: Summarize verses 19-25 to set the context for the conversation between Eli and Hannah.

### » SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- We can approach God with our frustrations and heartfelt desires, knowing we can trust Him to do what is best.
- We can encourage others by praying with them in agreement, sympathizing with their heartaches.
- We can praise God by recognizing all we have and are come from Him.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

### In what types of situations do people find it hard to trust God? When do they find it easy to trust Him?

- People usually find it easier to trust God when life is smooth and easy. It can be more difficult to trust when challenges emerge—when it feels like God is silent.
- We know God hears our prayers, and He does answer. In the life of a believer, learning to trust God more is a daily growing experience.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 1:10-11

#### What do these verses tell us about Hannah's emotions and attitude at this time?

- The words "deeply hurt" (v. 10) can be rendered "bitter of soul." Hannah's prayers were tearful, revealing her broken heart. She longed for a son and vowed to give the son she might have to God as His servant.
- Hannah was childless in a culture where the condition was viewed with disfavor. Some may even have suggested that her childlessness was the result of some sin on her part.
- God is big enough to handle our anguished, tear-stained prayers. We can bring our deepest hurts to Him, knowing that He cares.
- Hannah's vow to give a son back to God followed the law of the Nazirite (see Num. 6:1-21).

#### What changes more as a result of our prayers: our circumstances or us? Explain.

- Sometimes prayers change the circumstances. Sometimes prayers change a person's heart and attitude, even though the circumstances remain unchanged.
- God wants us to bring our requests to Him in prayer (see Phil. 4:6). Through our prayers, we invite God to work in both our hearts and our circumstances.

### 1 SAMUEL 1:12-18

#### What was Eli's wrong assumption?

- Eli saw Hannah praying and wrongly assumed she was drunk, because of her emotional behavior.
- Eli's quick judgment was wrong. We should be good, patient listeners—long to listen and slow to judge—watching out for the needs and hurts of those around us.

#### How did Eli encourage Hannah?

- When Eli realized what he saw was a sincere, hurting woman, he was quick to give Hannah a blessing.

- We can support each other by sharing one another's prayer burdens, helping to carry one another's heartaches and tears.

#### How did prayer change Hannah? When have you seen or experienced the power of prayer?

- Hannah's circumstances had not yet changed. She still longed for a son, but her attitude had changed, and she was no longer so despairing.
- The change occurred as Hannah let go of her brokenheartedness and trusted God to answer her prayer.

### 1 SAMUEL 1:26-28

#### How did Hannah demonstrate her trust in God?

- Before Samuel was conceived, Hannah made a vow to God that her son would serve Him. God had heard her prayers and answered by giving her a son. Hannah kept that vow by presenting Samuel to Eli, so he might serve in the temple.
- When Eli realized that Hannah was bringing Samuel to serve God, he responded by worshipping God.

#### Where do we see Hannah's humility? How can we reflect humility in our prayers?

- Hannah's humility is seen in her acknowledgment that all we have and are comes from God. Samuel belonged to God, and she understood that.
- The name Samuel means "requested from God" or "heard by God." Hannah knew the child was a gift from God.
- Our prayers will reflect humility when we ask for God's will in all areas of our lives. By freely acknowledging that all we have comes from God, we can seek His best plans for us.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

#### How does knowing that God is in control impact our prayers?

- There is great freedom in coming to the point where we realize that our lives rest in God's able hands. We can find joy in the way that our lives unfold, knowing He loves us, wants the best for us, and is in control of our circumstances.
- With God in control, we can always focus our prayers on His will being done in our lives.
- **Personal Challenge:** Evaluate your prayer life. Is it all that it can be? Are you letting God guide the ways you pray? Look for new ways to trust God each day. Ask Him to help your trust grow in the moments you feel weak. Be strong in sharing your heartaches with other believers who can support you in prayer. Look for opportunities to bear other's burdens as well.

# OBJECT LESSON

## A PENNY FOR EACH GROUP MEMBER

Distribute a penny (or any coin) to each participant. Then display your coin, calling attention to each side. Note the obvious: they are two sides of the same coin. Point out that you can't have heads without tails and vice versa; they just go together. Call for the group to name things that just "go together" (ex.: apple pie and ice cream; July 4th and fireworks). Say: *The two things that "go together" in today's study are faith and prayer.*

Read aloud 1 Samuel 1:10-11. Note Hannah's heartbreak over not having a child. Say: *Despite her deep distress, we still see evidence of Hannah's faith here.* Recalling the two sides of the coins, ask: *Where do you see signs of the connection between faith and prayer in Hannah's words?*

Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 1:12-18. Ask: *When have you struggled when it seemed like God was silent? How can a strong faith help you in those moments?* Note the change we see in Hannah in verse 18. Her circumstances have not yet changed, but her prayers and faith in God have changed her outlook.

Summarize the events of verses 19-25. Call for a volunteer to



read aloud 1 Samuel 1:26-28. Ask: *How do you see the connection between faith and prayer as Hannah dedicated Samuel for service to God? What can we learn from Hannah about dealing with heartaches and difficulties?* Affirm that we can trust that God always hears and answers our prayers when we humbly seek Him.

## DIG DEEPER

### THE NAZIRITE VOW

In verse 11, Hannah made a vow with God, and on the outside, it would appear that she added a very strange condition to his vow: a razor would never touch his head. When a person was being set apart for service unto God he was taking the vow of a Nazirite. This vow included not cutting his hair, abstaining from alcohol, and not going near a dead body (see Num. 6:1-21). A fuller picture of this vow can be found in Judges 13 when we are told of Samson's birth.

Read what *The New American Commentary* has to say about it:

The divine messenger does not leave the woman to puzzle over the instructions or their rationale: from the moment of his conception the boy is to be recognized and treated as a *[nazir]*, "Nazirite," of God. The noun *[nazir]* derives from a root meaning "to dedicate, consecrate [oneself in *niphal*]." According to the Israelite Law of the Nazirite, preserved in Num 6:1-8, a person under the Nazirite committed himself to three abstentions: (1) from wine or any other intoxicating drink; (2) from having his hair cut; (3) from contact with a corpse. According to this description a person would take the Nazirite vow voluntarily, simply as an act of dedication to God, for a specified and/or limited period of time.<sup>1</sup>

This would have been an extremely important vow in the culture in which Samuel was raised. In addition, not having children would have placed a stigma upon the woman. We can see evidence of this in the passage by the words used to describe Hannah's emotional state: "deeply hurt" (v. 10), "many tears," "I am a woman with a broken heart" (v. 15), "I've been praying from the depth of my anguish and resentment" (v. 16).

The Nazirite vow is very significant as Hannah has devoted her child's life completely to service of the Lord. There is still no higher calling on our lives, but since Christ's first coming this calling plays itself out differently in the present lives of believers. God's answer to Hannah's plea is a testament to God's mercy and answering of prayers. There are a few differences between the vows given to Samuel and Samson, but the result remains the same: God uses both of these men in tremendous ways and receives the glory from their lives.

1. Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (The New American Commentary)* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 403.

## SESSION 2

# CALLED

## 1 SAMUEL 3:1-10,17-21

<sup>1</sup> The boy **Samuel**<sup>a</sup> served the LORD in Eli's presence.<sup>b</sup>

In those days the word of the LORD was rare and prophetic visions<sup>c</sup> were not widespread. <sup>2</sup> One day Eli, whose eyesight was failing,<sup>d</sup> was lying in his room. <sup>3</sup> Before the lamp of God<sup>e</sup> had gone out,<sup>f</sup> Samuel was lying down in the tabernacle of the LORD, where the ark of God was located. <sup>4</sup> Then the LORD called Samuel, and he answered, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup> He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "I didn't call," Eli replied. "Go back and lie down." So he went and lay down. <sup>6</sup> Once again the LORD called, "Samuel!" Samuel got up, went to Eli, and said, "Here I am; you called me." "I didn't call, my son," he replied. "Go back and lie down." <sup>7</sup> Now Samuel had not yet experienced the LORD, because the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. <sup>8</sup> Once again, for the third time, the LORD called Samuel. He got up, went to Eli, and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli understood that the LORD was calling the boy.<sup>g</sup> <sup>9</sup> He told Samuel, "Go and lie down.

If He calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

<sup>10</sup> The LORD came, stood there, and called as before, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel responded, "Speak, for Your servant is listening." ... <sup>17</sup> "What was the message He gave you?" Eli asked. "Don't hide it from me.<sup>h</sup> May God punish you and do so severely if you hide anything from me that He told you."

<sup>18</sup> So Samuel told him everything and did not hide anything

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

**a** Samuel would become the earliest of the Hebrew prophets (after Moses) and the last of the Judges. He ministered to Israel as a prophet (see 1 Sam. 3:19-21), an intercessor (see 7:5-8; 8:6; 12:17-23; 15:11), a priest (see 2:35; 7:9,10), and a judge (see 1 Sam. 7:15-17).

**b** "ministered before the LORD under Eli" (NIV); "served the LORD by assisting Eli" (NLT); "serving GOD under Eli's direction" (MSG).

**c** The word *chazown* means a divine vision or word from God. During this part of Israel's history they were not hearing from God frequently.

**d** Eli was nearly blind. It's interesting to note that because of the severe handicap, a blind man was ineligible to become a priest (see Lev. 21:18).

**e** Lamps were symbolically used throughout the Bible, depicting God's divine presence. Jesus would later be depicted as "the light of the world" (see John 8:12; 9:5).

**f** According to 2 Chronicles 13:11, the Levites and in this case Samuel, under Eli's tutelage, would be tending the candle outside of the tent of meeting "every morning and every evening."

**g** When Samuel mistook the voice of God for the voice of Eli, Eli instructed him to ask the Lord to speak the next time he heard the voice.

**h** Eli knew God had spoken to Samuel. Since this was rare in those days, Eli made sure Samuel knew that Eli wanted the whole revelation of God—to not leave anything out.

(Continued on the next page)

from him. Eli responded, “He is the LORD. He will do what He thinks is good.”<sup>19</sup> Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and **He fulfilled everything Samuel prophesied.**<sup>20</sup> All Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a confirmed prophet of the LORD.  
<sup>21</sup> The LORD continued to appear in Shiloh, because there He revealed Himself to Samuel by His word.

**i** “everything Samuel said proved to be reliable” (NLT); “Samuel’s prophetic record was flawless” (MSG); God “let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground” (NIV).

## “ TALKING POINTS

### »» A VOICE (1 Sam. 3:1-10)

- God spoke to Samuel while he was resting in the tabernacle.
- Once Samuel understood that God was calling him, Samuel committed to listen to God.
- Note: Affirm God primarily speaking and calling through His Word and that messages delivered must be tested against the truth of Scripture.

### »» A MESSAGE (1 Sam. 3:17-18)

- When approached by Eli, Samuel shared what God had told him: that Eli’s family was about to be judged. Eli submitted to God’s judgment.
- Note: Explain that the message was not delivered to coerce Eli’s sons into service.

### »» A PROPHET (1 Sam. 3:19-21)

- Samuel became recognized as God’s prophet, confirmed by God through fulfilled prophecies.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- We need to sharpen our spiritual ears so we can hear God’s voice when He calls.
- God’s message of truth is not always easy to deliver but that does not exempt us from delivering the truth.
- God wants to move us to maturity in our spiritual lives and in our service to Him.

## NOTES



## FOCUS ATTENTION

### What's your first thought when the telephone rings?

- Sometimes a ringing phone brings the familiar voice of a family member or friend. Other times it's an unknown voice—a wrong number or a sales pitch.
- As believers, we should eagerly expect God's voice to call to us. We should always be ready to hear and to act on His call.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 3:1-10

#### How did God call Samuel? What was Samuel's attitude as God spoke to him?

- Samuel was resting when God called him. The "lamp of God" burned from evening until morning, so verse 3 suggests that this calling happened just before dawn.
- When God called Samuel, at first he was confused, thinking it was Eli's voice. Samuel had never heard God calling him before, so his confusion isn't surprising. Finally, Eli thought it might be God calling and suggested this to Samuel.
- When Samuel realized it was God calling, he responded with a heart ready to follow God's voice.

#### How does God call us? What kinds of distractions keep us from hearing God's voice?

- Today God speaks to us primarily through His Word. Any message thought to be coming from God must be tested against the truth of Scripture.
- With the availability of technology and our busy lives, we are constantly bombarded with all kinds of messages. We must be diligent in studying God's Word and listening for His voice.

#### How do we separate God's voice from our own desires?

- We can desire something so much that we come to view it as God's desire for our lives too. It's best to keep our prayers focused on God's will for our lives—not necessarily our heart's desire for our lives.
- We can follow Jesus' example, as He prayed just before His death—"not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

### 1 SAMUEL 3:17-18

#### How was God's message to Eli a hard message?

- Samuel did not want to share the details of his vision with Eli—that Eli's family would be destroyed because of the evil actions of his sons. These sons, priests like their father, abused the office of priest and lived in complete disobedience to God.
- Eli had heard this same message of judgment from another man of God (1 Sam. 2:27-34).
- Eli would be punished because he knew of his sons' disobedience and did nothing to curb their evil deeds.

### How did Eli respond to the hard message?

- Samuel was reluctant to share the message of God's judgment with Eli, who was both a guardian and mentor to Samuel. But Eli demanded that Samuel tell what he knew.
- Eli did not protest or reject God's hard message of judgment that was coming to Eli and his family. Eli accepted that God is Lord and that God's decisions are good.

### 1 SAMUEL 3:19-21

#### Verse 19 says "Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him." What can we do to grow in spiritual maturity?

- Samuel was willing to receive and follow God's Word (see v. 21). This kind of obedience is key for any believer wanting to grow spiritually.
- From "Dan to Beer-sheba" (v. 20) was a way of describing all of Israel. These two locations marked Israel's northern and southern borders.
- God demonstrated that Samuel was His prophet by the fulfillment of Samuel's prophecies.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

#### What steps can we take to be better listeners to God's call in our lives?

- Trying to hear God's call in our lives can be like trying to hear a conversation in a busy room full of people: He's speaking, but the clutter of noise and distractions around us means we aren't hearing much of what He says.
- We need to be intentional about carving out time and space in our lives to listen to God. We know God speaks to us through His Word, so spending regular, daily time studying the Bible is one strong way we can listen for His voice.
- God also speaks to us through our prayers and through the wise counsel of mature believers.
- **Personal Challenge:** God's voice isn't necessarily a shout; sometimes it's a whisper. Start each day asking God to make you sensitive to His voice speaking to you throughout the day. Be ready to obey when you hear it.

# OBJECT LESSON

## A SCHOOL PICTURE

Display a picture from your school days. Encourage participants to recall their school days. Ask: *How did you feel when the teacher called on you to ask you a question?* (Ex.: nervous, anxious, ready, stressed) Explain: *Today we will look at how Samuel responded when God called his name.*

Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 3:1-10. Note the progression from Samuel not knowing who called to finally responding with obedience to God's voice. Discuss: *In what ways does God speak to believers today? What can we learn from verse 10 about the kind of attitude we should have in listening for God's voice in our own lives?* Affirm that God speaks and calls us mainly through His Word today.

Explain: *God's message to Samuel had revealed that Eli and his sons would be punished—the sons for their evil behavior as priests and Eli for his failure to restrain his sons.* Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 3:17-18. Ask: *What do we see in Eli's attitude at this point?*

Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 3:19-21. Ask: *What evidence do we see of God's blessing on Samuel and his ministry?*



Remind the group of the photo and how you have changed since then. Emphasize the importance of growth, especially spiritual growth. Ask: *What can we do as a group to encourage each other in hearing God's voice?* Affirm the need for all of us to sharpen our spiritual ears and prioritize Bible study so we can hear and know God's voice when he calls.

## DIG DEEPER

### THE TONE OF 1 SAMUEL 3

Notice the similarities between the characters in the story of Eli and Samuel and the state of the entire nation of Israel. The revelatory visions from God were infrequent to say the least. Proverbs 29:18 says this:

"Without revelation people run wild,  
but one who listens to instruction will be happy."

The first part of this session's Scripture sets a very dark and hopeless tone. The people of Israel were moving away from God, so there was no word from God. Eli's eyesight was nearly gone, and the same thing can be said about the spiritual eyes of the Israelites. They had walked away from God, blinded to their spiritual condition.

Secondly notice Samuel's connection to "the lamp of God" (v. 3). As the lamp of God was a light in the darkness so was Samuel. The nation was in a desperate place, and there seemed to be nothing but darkness. Even the leadership of the priests had fallen into darkness.

Just as the light from the lamp of God shone through the darkness, so did Samuel; he was going to be the light that would help Israel find the right path.

Finally notice that after God called Samuel and Samuel obeyed Him, things began to change. God spoke again—something that had not happened in a long time—and He was showing Himself faithful by going out before Samuel's message.

When God's appointed people speak God's Word, then true reform can happen. God promised Samuel's words would be effective, and they were: "Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and He fulfilled everything Samuel prophesied" (v. 19).

## SESSION 3

# WORTHY!

## 1 SAMUEL 5:1-6; 6:11-16

<sup>1</sup> After the **Philistines**<sup>a</sup> had captured **the ark of God**,<sup>b</sup> they took it **from Ebenezer to Ashdod**,<sup>c</sup> <sup>2</sup> brought it into the temple of **Dagon**<sup>d</sup> and placed it next to his statue. <sup>3</sup> When the people of Ashdod got up early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen with his face to the ground **before**<sup>e</sup> the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and returned him to his place. <sup>4</sup> But when they got up early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen with his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. This time, both **Dagon's head and the palms of his hands were broken off**<sup>f</sup> and lying on the threshold. Only Dagon's torso remained. <sup>5</sup> That is why, to this day, the priests of Dagon and everyone who enters the temple of Dagon in Ashdod do not step on Dagon's threshold. <sup>6</sup> The LORD's hand **was heavy**<sup>g</sup> on the people of Ashdod, terrorizing and afflicting the people of Ashdod and its territory with **tumors**.<sup>h</sup> ... <sup>11</sup> Then they put the ark of the LORD on the cart, along with the box containing the **gold mice and the images of their tumors**.<sup>i</sup> <sup>12</sup> The cows **went straight**<sup>j</sup> up the road to Beth-shemesh. They stayed on that one highway, lowing as they went; they never strayed to the right or to the left. The Philistine rulers were walking behind them to the territory of Beth-shemesh. <sup>13</sup> The people of **Beth-shemesh**<sup>k</sup> were harvesting wheat in the valley, and when they looked up and saw the ark, they were overjoyed to see it. <sup>14</sup> The cart came to the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there near a large rock. The people of the city chopped up the cart and offered the **cows**<sup>l</sup> as a burnt offering to the LORD. <sup>15</sup> The Levites removed the ark of the LORD, along with the box containing the gold objects, and placed them on the large rock. That day the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices to the LORD. <sup>16</sup> When the five Philistine rulers observed this, they returned to Ekron that same day.

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** An enemy from Canaan who had many victories against the Israelites
- b** Also called "the ark of the covenant," the ark was a symbol of God's presence with His people. Inside were the tablets of the Ten Commandments, a bowl of manna, and Aaron's staff.
- c** The Philistines took the ark 19 miles toward the sea to Ashdod, one of their major capitals.
- d** The Philistines worshiped Dagon as their chief deity.
- e** When they arose, the Philistines found their god in a position of reverence with his face down before the ark of the covenant.
- f** Again in the position of reverence, this time their god's head and hands were cut off (a method of execution in that time). It demonstrated God's military power over their idol and that He deserves reverence.
- g** The Hebrew transliteration *kabad* has the connotation of grievously afflicting or burdening.
- h** The Philistines were aware of God's plagues against the Egyptians and were about to experience His wrath firsthand.
- i** God had afflicted the Philistines with tumors (5:9). The Philistine leaders were trying to appease God by sending them back with the ark as a guilt offering, so that God would lift their afflictions.
- j** The cows never deviated from the path to Israel. The Hebrew transliteration *yashar* means to be pleasing or agreeable.
- k** A city set aside for Levites, who would care for the ark; they would be most excited for its return.
- l** These were female cows, and so when they were offered, they were going against the law "to bring an unblemished male" (Lev. 1:3)—an example of doing something in right motive but wrong action.

## NOTES

### »» THE HOLY GOD (1 Sam. 5:1-5)

- When the ark, which represented God’s presence, was placed alongside an idol, God caused the idol to topple. The people understood the event as Dagon being defeated.
- Help people understand that idols can be physical items worshiped as well as items taking the place of God in a person’s life.

### »» JUDGMENT EXPERIENCED

(1 Sam. 5:6)

- Because the people of Ashdod failed to recognize God as holy (also see vv. 7-12), they experienced a divinely-initiated plague.

### »» INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWED

(1 Sam. 6:11-12)

- After receiving instructions for returning the ark to the Israelites, the Philistines returned the ark as instructed (see vv. 1-10).

### »» WORSHIP OFFERED

(1 Sam. 6:13-16)

- When the ark arrived unexpectedly in Beth-shemesh, the people worshiped God by offering sacrifices.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Anything we place before or equal to God will fail and topple, with us taking a fall as well.
- Since God is holy, we should follow His directions completely.
- God is worthy of our very best in worship.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

### In what ways have you seen fans celebrate their favorite sports team?

- Fans invest time, energy, and money in cheering for their teams; some may take this adoration and celebration to extremes.
- Consider the ways we celebrate and worship God. God is deserving of our very best worship and praise. We need to evaluate whether what we offer God during worship is our best.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 5:1-5

#### Who were the Philistines and what were they doing with the ark of God?

- The Philistines were a strong military power and rivals to the people of Israel. First Samuel 4 describes how the Philistines routed Israel's army, killed the priests, and captured the ark of the Lord. Eli the priest died upon hearing the news of these losses.
- In the culture of that day, people would have viewed the loss of the ark in battle as a reflection of God's inability to protect His people. The theological implications of this defeat were as significant as the political or military implications.
- Dagon was one of the Philistines' gods. When the Philistines placed the ark of God (representing God's presence) alongside a statue of Dagon, the statue fell, breaking off its head and hands.

#### What are our idols? In what ways does God cause our idols to tumble?

- Idols can be physical items that we worship, but they also include anything taking the place of God in a person's life.
- We may see people living in disobedience to God, and outwardly it seems they are prosperous and successful. God's Word assures us that a day of accounting will come. There will come a time where God will bring down all our idols.

### 1 SAMUEL 5:6

#### What does this verse teach us about God's attitude toward idols?

- God's destruction of Dagon's statue was only the beginning. The people of Ashdod (a major Philistine city) soon experienced God's judgment in the form of a plague of tumors.
- When we fail to recognize God as holy, we risk the peril of God's harsh judgment in our lives.

#### In what ways do we treat the holy things of God lightly?

- While we might never bow down to worship carved statues, we could be guilty of treating the holy things of God lightly.
- As we prepare to worship God, we must evaluate our hearts, our words, and our actions: Do we approach our worship of God in a casual, lighthearted manner? Or do we enter worship with a right heart and a desire to honor and know Him more?

### 1 SAMUEL 6:11-12

#### Why did the Philistines return the ark of God to the Israelites?

- Living with God's punishment, the plague of tumors, for seven months was long enough.
- The Philistines recognized the plague as God's judgment and eventually realized they had to return the ark.
- Following the specific instructions given in 1 Samuel 6:1-10, the Philistines carefully loaded the ark on a cart and sent it back to the Israelites.

#### We know God desires our obedience, so why do we sometimes choose to disobey?

- At times disobedience might seem to be the easy road. Taking a stand against the culture and standing up for God can be a harder choice.
- Sometimes the shiny, sparkling enticement of sin seems to be fun. But it's a short-lived pleasure that reaps a harvest of sorrow long term.

### 1 SAMUEL 6:13-16

#### How did the Israelites respond when they saw the Philistines returning the ark of God?

- The people stopped their work in the fields, built an altar there, and offered sacrifices to God. The people "were overjoyed" in seeing the return of the ark (v. 13).

#### How do we reflect the joy of salvation in our worship?

- Emphasize that God deserves our very best in worship.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

#### How can we guard against idols in our lives today?

- Carved statues are easy to avoid. Remember that idols are any thing or any person whom we place above God in our lives.
- When we give God priority in our lives then all the other things—relationships, home, career—will fall into their proper, appropriate places. Matthew 6:33 tells us to seek Him first.
- **Personal Challenge:** Think about the ways you worship God. What steps could you take to make your worship more joy-filled and meaningful? Spending more preparation time in God's Word, seeking His face in prayer, or attending church with a renewed attitude?

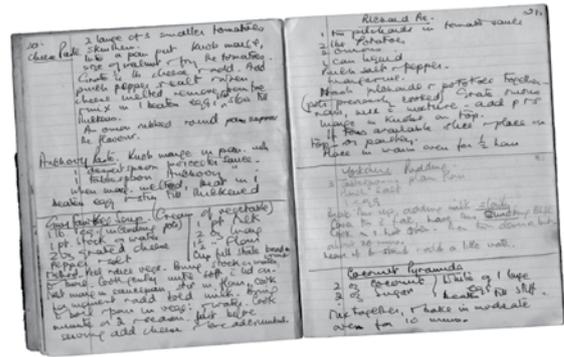
# OBJECT LESSON

## A SET OF WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS

Display a set of instructions (ex.: a recipe, game instructions). Ask participants to indicate whether they usually read the instructions or prefer to figure it out. Ask: *When is it essential to follow instructions?* Explain: *Today, we'll look at an event when instructions were very important.* Explain that the Philistines had captured the ark of God, which represented God's presence among His people.

Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 5:1-5. Ask: *How did God show Himself to be different from the false god Dagon?* Stress that the true God of Israel was both powerful and holy. Ask: *Where and what are the idols we must guard against today?*

Read aloud 1 Samuel 5:6, and comment that God's judgment for the Philistines was swift. Discuss: *The people of Ashdod refused to recognize God as holy. How did they suffer for that disobedience?* Challenge participants to think of times they've seen disobedience lead to suffering. Explain: *God's punishment was enough for the Philistines to recognize God's power and decide to return the ark.* Remind the group of the instructions you've displayed. Explain: *In 1 Samuel 6:1-10, we find the detailed instructions the Philistines were*



*to follow in returning the ark.* Direct a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 6:11-16. Ask: *When or where have you seen the importance of following God's instructions for our lives? What should be the characteristics of our worship?*

Affirm that since God is holy, we should always follow His instructions completely. He is worthy of our best.

## DIG DEEPER

### PRAISE GOD

There was a hymn written by Julia Cady Cory in 1902 called "We Praise You, O God, Our Redeemer." The first verse of that hymn ties to this story found in 1 Samuel 5. It reads:

We praise You, O God, our Redeemer, Creator,  
In grateful devotion our tribute we bring.  
We lay it before You, we kneel and adore You,  
We bless Your holy name, glad praises we sing.

Psalm 145:3 also reflects God's worthiness, and it says the following:

Yahweh is great and is highly praised;  
His greatness is unsearchable.

In Isaiah 48 God was speaking about idols and praise, and He says in verse 11:

I will act for My own sake, indeed, My own,  
for how can I be defiled?  
I will not give My glory to another.

This hymn and these verses show us only God is worthy of our worship and praise. Everything else will fail in comparison to the Most High. This tangible story of how God desecrated a god's statue proved to the Philistines that they had taken something that belonged to the one true God. The afflictions that plagued their cities just solidified the fact that something was different about the God of Israel.

Let us not forget that today we serve that very same God—our God who never changes and is still worthy of our worship and praise.

## SESSION 4

# KING?

## 1 SAMUEL 8:4-9,19-22

<sup>4</sup> So all the elders of Israel<sup>a</sup> gathered together and went to Samuel<sup>b</sup> at Ramah.<sup>c</sup> <sup>5</sup> They said to him, “Look, you are old, and your sons do not follow your example.<sup>d</sup> Therefore, appoint a king to judge us the same as all the other nations have.” <sup>6</sup> When they said, “Give us a king to judge us,” Samuel considered their demand sinful,<sup>e</sup> so he prayed to the LORD. <sup>7</sup> But the LORD told him, “Listen to the people and everything they say to you.<sup>f</sup> They have not rejected you; they have rejected Me as their king.<sup>g</sup> <sup>8</sup> They are doing the same thing to you that they have done to Me, since the day I brought them out of Egypt until this day, abandoning Me and worshiping other gods. <sup>9</sup> Listen to them, but you must solemnly warn them<sup>h</sup> and tell them about the rights of the king who will rule over them.” ... <sup>19</sup> The people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We must have a king over us. <sup>20</sup> Then we’ll be like all the other nations:<sup>i</sup> our king will judge us, go out before us, and fight our battles.” <sup>21</sup> Samuel listened to all the people’s words and then repeated them to the LORD. <sup>22</sup> “Listen to them,” the LORD told Samuel. “Appoint a king for them.” Then Samuel told the men of Israel, “Each of you, go back to your city.”

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** These elders were the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- b** Samuel was the prophet of Israel when Saul became their first king.
- c** The name of several locations in Israel, it means “height” in Hebrew; so these places were almost always raised locations.
- d** In verses 2-3, we find out that Samuel’s sons Joel and Abijah were corrupt judges. They “turned toward dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice” (v. 3). Clearly, this would make them poor candidates to replace Samuel.
- e** Samuel was a man of God and it displeased him to hear of Israel’s abandoning of God’s rule.
- f** God commanded Samuel to grant the people’s request and appoint a king for them.
- g** According to verses 8-9, the people of Israel did not care about all that God had done for them in the past.
- h** God didn’t just give in to their request; He asked Samuel to warn them about all the implications of their decision to have a king rule over them.
- i** This is fairly simple to understand, but the implications are far more devastating. Israel wanted to be like every other nation instead of following God, which had clouded their judgment and affected their relationship with God; they believed a human authority could solve their problems—specifically to judge them and to fight their battles.
- j** Through God’s mercy, Israel would eventually be given King David, who knew Israel’s battles belonged to God (1 Sam. 17:47).

### »» **A KING DEMANDED** (1 Sam. 8:4-5)

- As Samuel aged, the leaders of Israel encouraged Samuel to appoint a king to rule them.
- Their rationale was they wanted to be like surrounding countries.
- Note: Emphasize that their rationale for wanting a king was their sin: they rejected God's lordship.

### »» **REJECTION DECLARED** (1 Sam. 8:6-9)

- Israel wanted to be the same as all the other nations by having a king. Recognizing this request as sin, Samuel approached God.
- God pointed out that the people were rejecting Him and directed Samuel to allow them to carry out their desires.
- God also directed Samuel to warn the people about the dangers of relying on an earthly king.

### »» **REBELLION DETERMINED** (1 Sam. 8:19-22)

- After Samuel warned them, the people continued to demand a king.
- God directed Samuel to initiate the process for appointing a king.

### »» **SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

- God desires His people to be distinct from others, trusting Him in all matters.
- When we reject God's leaders and their warnings, we are rejecting God in the process.
- We can trust God to provide godly leaders even when we are tempted to take matters into our own hands.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**Recall the childlike nature of demanding to have your way. Does that attitude more often lead to satisfaction or disappointment?**

- As children, we likely all had moments when we demanded “mine” or “my way.”
- Demanding to have it all our way can sometimes bring momentary pleasure. In the end, however, we find that true joy comes from following God’s way in every situation.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 8:4-5

**How can wanting to be like the people around you lead to trouble?**

- God called on Israel to be distinct. In disobedience they chose to be “the same as all the other nations” (v. 5).
- Peer pressure can be a problem for people of all ages. For the Israelites, desiring a king so they could be like the nations around them was a sinful choice. They were rejecting God’s lordship in their lives.
- God’s desire is that we be more like Him in every area of our lives. Ask yourself if you’re better or worse because of the people with whom you spend your time. Ask if people are better off because of spending time with you.

**When have you struggled with wanting to take matters into your own hands instead of letting God lead?**

- Following God’s lead sometimes requires us to be patient. We must learn to wait and listen for God to speak to us.
- We live in a culture of microwave popcorn, high-speed Internet, and 24-hours news. So much of what we desire is available with just a tap, click, or a swipe. It’s easy to grow impatient when waiting to hear from God. Yet it is important to wait on God’s timing and follow His direction.

### 1 SAMUEL 8:6-9

**What did Samuel think of the Israelites desire to be like their neighbors? What did God think?**

- The Bible does not reveal Samuel’s personal feelings about the matter, but Scripture tells us that he recognized their desire to be like other nations as a sinful choice. Samuel took their request to God in prayer.
- In God’s eyes, the people’s desire to be like other nations was a rejection of His lordship and Samuel’s leadership in their lives.
- God is willing to allow His people to make their own decisions, even if those choices are poor and lead to pain and regret.

**How can we distinguish between God’s perfect will and His permissive will?**

- Nothing happens apart from God’s will. Some things He causes to happen. Some things He simply allows to happen in the unfolding of our lives as we make choices.
- God did not cause the Israelites to have a king; it was His desire that it not happen until later. However, God allowed the people to move forward with their choice to name a king and be like other nations.
- Today we can know God’s will for our lives by diligently studying His Word, praying, and seeking the counsel of mature believers.

### 1 SAMUEL 8:19-22

**Verse 19 tells us “The people refused to listen to Samuel.” The phrase “listen to” could also be translated “to obey.” What’s the connection between listening and obeying?**

- The people heard Samuel’s warning, describing what life would be like with a king instead of God as a leader. Still, they refused to take the next step and heed Samuel’s warning. They were determined to have their own king.
- We can hear God’s instructions for living but neglect to take the next step and follow those instructions in daily living.
- True obedience requires hearing and following through with our actions.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

**Are we truly trusting God to lead in our lives? What keeps us from giving God control in every area of our lives?**

- When we first come to faith in Jesus, we accept Him as our Savior. But the relationship does not stay in that place. Our desire should be to have Him as Lord in our lives. Being a Christian is not just a Sunday event; it is a daily discipline of trusting God in every corner of our lives.
- Have you ever found yourself thinking, “It might be easy to give God control of my family but not my finances.” “I might follow His plan for my Sunday mornings but not my free time on Saturday night.” God wants our total obedience. Partial obedience is not enough.
- **Personal Challenge:** Examine your heart and life. Ask yourself if there is anything keeping you from giving God full control of your life today. Pray for God to bring that area under His control.

# OBJECT LESSON

## A BUNCH OF PENCILS AND ONE PEN

Display several grapes and one cherry, or a handful of pencils and one pen. Lead the group to name ways that the items are alike and what makes the one item different from the others. Explain: *At times it's easy for us to see when one item is distinct from those around it. Today, we will explore what it means for us, as believers, to be distinct from others.*

Guide: *At this point in their history, the Israelites were being ruled by judges. Samuel the prophet was the last judge to rule.* Instruct a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 8:4-5. Ask: *In demanding to have a king to rule over them, what were the people of Israel forgetting?* (Ex.: That God was their king, that the timing was wrong, that they were not to be like the other nations, etc.) Stress that the people's sin in desiring a king was that they were rejecting God's rule in their lives.

Read aloud 1 Samuel 8:6-9. Say: *God told Samuel to let the people have their king, but to warn them of the costs of this decision.* Note that God gave the people instructions for right living, but He also gave them free will to make choices. God does the same for us today. Ask: *What are some of the ways that*



*disobeying God costs us?* Explain that Samuel warned the people of the dangers in their desire for a king to rule them.

Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 8:19-22. Say: *God wants us to trust Him as Lord of our lives. And He calls for believers to be distinct from other around us.* Affirm God as the only true King who desires for us to trust Him and be His distinct people.

## DIG DEEPER

### A KING FOR ISRAEL?

The Israelites desired a king because Samuel's judgeship had begun to fail. He was old and his sons, like Eli's, perverted justice by practicing self-serving leadership. The people also wanted the benefits of a central authority, as their neighboring countries had.

Samuel resisted their request, and sought God's guidance on how best to handle the matter. God permitted Israel to have a king, but instructed Samuel to warn the people of the trouble they faced in kingship. The people persisted, and so God granted their request.

Having a king formed a dualistic problem for the people of Israel. This was a complete rejection of God's decree that Israel should be different from other people. Their one request would separate them further from God's lordship and His protection. God had been Israel's King up to that point (Deut. 33:5). By seeking an earthly king, the people displayed their dissatisfaction with God's rule and reign over them.

In verse 5, the people asked for a king who would judge them like all the other nations. The people of Israel thought that a political change would fix their spiritual problem. Every other nation had a king who would handle the lordship of his people;

the king was the political leader. Israel's request showed that they thought they could judge for themselves what was best.

Secondly, the Israelites wanted a king to go before them and fight in battle (v. 20). The people of Israel had forgotten the many times that God had fought their battles for them (Ex. 14:14,25; 15:3; Num. 10:35; Deut. 1:30; 3:22; 4:20; 20:1-4). This one demand would negate everything that made Israel different from the other nations. The sin of the garden (Gen. 3:6) would continue to play itself out through the nation of Israel over and over again, for Israel's pride fooled them into believing they knew better than God, which ultimately is our problem as well.

## SESSION 5

# FEARED

## 1 SAMUEL 12:12-22

<sup>12</sup> But when **you**<sup>a</sup> saw that **Nahash**<sup>b</sup> king of the **Ammonites**<sup>c</sup> was coming against you, you said to me, ‘No, we must have a king rule over us’—even though the LORD your God is your king. <sup>13</sup> “Now here is **the king you’ve chosen**,<sup>d</sup> the one you requested. Look, this is the king the LORD has placed over you. <sup>14</sup> If you **fear**<sup>e</sup> the LORD, **worship**<sup>f</sup> and obey Him, and if you don’t rebel against the LORD’s **command**,<sup>g</sup> then both you and the king who rules over you will follow the LORD your God. <sup>15</sup> However, if you disobey the LORD and rebel against His command, **the LORD’s hand will be against you and against your ancestors**.<sup>h</sup> <sup>16</sup> “Now, therefore, present yourselves and see this great thing that the LORD will do **before your eyes**.<sup>i</sup> <sup>17</sup> Isn’t the wheat harvest today?

I will call on the LORD and He will send thunder and rain, so that you will know and see what a great evil you committed in the LORD’s sight by requesting a king for yourselves.”

<sup>18</sup> Samuel called on the LORD, and on that day the LORD sent thunder and rain. As a result, all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. <sup>19</sup> They pleaded with Samuel, “Pray to the LORD your God for your servants, so we won’t die! For we have added to all our sins **the evil of requesting a king**<sup>j</sup> for ourselves.” <sup>20</sup> Samuel replied, “Don’t be afraid. Even though you have committed all this evil, don’t turn away from following the LORD. Instead, worship the LORD with all your heart. <sup>21</sup> Don’t turn away to follow **worthless things**<sup>k</sup> that

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** Meaning all of Israel
- b** An Ammonite king who besieged Jabesh-gilead during Saul’s reign as king of Israel
- c** Descendants of Benammi, Lot’s younger son, who aided enemies of Israel to acquire their territory
- d** Samuel announced that Saul would become king, proving that the people had a choice but that God, in His mercy, used human evil to accomplish His will.
- e** The Hebrew transliteration *yare’* carries the connotation of reverence, honor, and respect for God.
- f** The word “worship” in verse 14 literally means “to serve.”
- g** The law given to Israel by Moses at Mount Sinai.
- h** Just like in 1 Samuel 5:9 and at many other places throughout Scripture, this is an expression used when God is going to come against someone, usually with plagues or afflictions.
- i** Samuel was about to call down a supernatural event from God before the people so that they would see, believe, and remember.
- j** Asking for a king was not necessarily Israel’s sin; the problem stemmed from Israel’s desire not to wait on God’s timing and provision in order to be like the other nations.
- k** This phrase is an indictment of trying to follow the other nations and turning away from God toward empty idols—therefore promising something that the idols could not deliver.

(Continued on the next page)

can't profit or deliver you; they are worthless.<sup>22</sup> The LORD will not abandon His people, **because of His great name<sup>1</sup>** and **because He has determined to make you His own people.<sup>m</sup>**

**I** This phrasing appears throughout Scripture to remind Israel/us that the only reason God does anything is for His own name and glory.

**m** This phrase echoes back to God's promise to Israel found in Deuteronomy 14:2: "For you are a holy people belonging to the LORD your God. The LORD has chosen you to be His own possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth."

## “” TALKING POINTS

### »» THE COVENANT REVISITED

(1 Sam. 12:12-15)

- As he introduced the demanded king (Saul), Samuel reminded the people of the promise and curse of God's covenant.
- Note: Explain that even though God permitted the Israelites to have a king, the king as well as the people remained subject to the covenant's stipulations.

### »» A SIGN DELIVERED (1 Sam. 12:16-18)

- Samuel prophesied and then asked God to provide a thunderstorm during the harvest season as a demonstration of God's judgment and power.
- As a result of the storm, God and Samuel were feared by the people.
- Note: Characterize the fear of God as producing both reverence and trepidation.

### »» GOD'S MERCY AND GRACE

(1 Sam. 12:19-22)

- The people pleaded for their lives, realizing they had sinned. Samuel called them to worship God, knowing that He is full of mercy and grace, and He is faithful to His promises.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- God is faithful to His people even when they are unfaithful.
- God's power and character are demonstrated through nature.
- When we approach God with reverent fear, we find His grace and mercy.

## NOTES



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**What were you afraid of as a child? When is fear good? When is it bad?**

- Fear can be good when it keeps us from doing something reckless or dangerous. Fear can be bad when it keeps us from taking on new responsibilities or stepping out of our comfort zones in a direction we should go.
- In today's study, we'll discuss God's character and the place fear has in our relationship with Him.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 12:12-15

**Why was Israel's request to have a king sinful?**

- In pressing Samuel to find them a king (so they could be like the people living around them), the Israelites were rejecting God as their king.
- Samuel reminded the Israelites that even though God permitted them to have a human king, they were still subject to the covenant's stipulations that they were to fear, worship, and obey the Lord. If they disobeyed God's commands, punishment would follow.
- The heart of the covenant relationship between God and His people is found in passages like Exodus 6:7, "I will take you as My people, and I will be your God." The covenant did not change despite their desire for a human king.

### 1 SAMUEL 12:16-18

**How did God demonstrate His power before the people?**

- Samuel called the people together and told them God would perform a heavenly sign, showing that the people had sinned terribly by insisting on a king to rule over them.
- God sent a thunderstorm during the time of wheat harvest when it is abnormal for rain to occur. The storm displayed God's judgment against the people for their willful disobedience in insisting on a king.
- Because of the thunderstorm, the people realized they had offended God, and they "greatly feared" Him (v. 18). This fear produced both reverence and unease in the people.

**Is fear of God a positive or negative thing? Explain.**

- Fear of God can involve many feelings—terror, honor, submission, dread, astonishment, and awe.
- People who are enemies of God might feel terror in their fear because of His unlimited knowledge and power, for God is consistent in His judgment based on His righteous character.
- For believers, the same word "fear" is used to describe the proper attitude toward God. But this carries the ideas of respect, reverence, or awe. Christ has satisfied God's wrath

once and for all, so we do not fear condemnation, but we are still accountable to a holy God.

### 1 SAMUEL 12:19-22

**Samuel warned the people to turn away from "worthless things that can't profit or deliver you" (v. 21). What "worthless things" do people follow after today, hoping that these things can deliver them?**

- Anything that receives higher priority than God in our lives becomes a "worthless thing."
- Our possessions, our jobs, our educations, our skills—these may enrich our lives, but they can never deliver us.
- In turning from worthless things, Samuel called on the people to follow and worship God.
- In the end, only our relationship with God remains. We should invest wisely in that relationship.

**What did the people beg Samuel to do? What words of hope did Samuel offer?**

- The Israelites pleaded with Samuel to pray for their protection against God's judgment.
- Even though the Israelites had sinned in asking for a king, they could still choose to follow God and to worship Him.
- Samuel promised the people God would not abandon them.
- God is unchanged, still full of mercy and grace today. We can count on His faithfulness to His promises.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

**Where have you seen examples of God's faithfulness in your life and in the life of your family? How can we show our gratitude to God for His grace and mercy?**

- Recall the ways you have seen God working through your family life, in details both small and big.
- Remembering God's faithfulness in the past gives us courage and strength to face the new challenges of today.
- We honor God and show our gratitude in the way we live. Hebrews 13:15 reminds us that our lives should be "a sacrifice of praise" to Him.
- **Personal Challenge:** Approach your worship of God this week with fresh eyes—with an attitude of respect, reverence, and awe. If it feels like the same old casual routine, then what steps can you take to worship in a way that truly honors God?

# OBJECT LESSON

## SIX FOOD CANS AND TWO GROCERY BAGS

Bring six identical cans and two plastic grocery bags. Load four cans in one bag and two cans in the other. Invite volunteers to lift a bag with each hand. Ask: *How balanced or unbalanced does it feel?* Then load the two bags evenly with three cans in each bag. Invite volunteers to lift the bags. Ask: *How balanced does it feel now?* Explain: *Today, we will examine God's judgment and His grace. Look for the balance we see of God's judgment and grace as we study.*

Direct a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 12:12-15. Say: *Even though God permitted the Israelites to have a king, the king and all the people were still responsible for keeping their covenant relationship with God. The people were to fear, worship, and obey God.* Ask: *Where do we see evidence of God's grace here? Evidence of God's judgment?* Note that both grace and judgment are evident here.

Call for someone to read aloud 1 Samuel 12:16-18. Explain that thunderstorms did not usually occur during the harvest time. Ask: *Where's the evidence of God's judgment here? Why did the people fear God? What's involved in fearing God?* Acknowledge that God's holy and righteous character will not allow disobedience to go unpunished.



Instruct someone to read aloud 1 Samuel 12:19-22. Note: *The people had realized their sin and then were fearful of God's wrath.* Ask: *Where's the evidence of God's grace here? How do you see evidence of God's grace at work in your life today?* Affirm that God's character and power demand we approach Him with fear, but we will always see a balance of God's judgment and His grace.

## DIG DEEPER

### SAMUEL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

When we look at Samuel's farewell address, we should quickly notice the themes of judgment and redemption. This chapter of Samuel is indicative of the entirety of the Old Testament story. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden in Genesis 3, there has been a cycle present. The cycle is repeated almost verbatim until Christ shows up. The people of God walk with Him and enjoy His blessings; then the people turn away from God to foreign idols or other sins. God sends a decree of judgment if they will not repent. After facing judgment, the people repent, and God relents of His judgment. And so the cycle continues.

Samuel used history to show this truth: God never left His people without a complete understanding of what was expected of them. God is faithful even when His children are not.

In Genesis 15, God made a covenant with Abraham. Look at verses 17-21:

When the sun had set and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch appeared and passed between the divided animals. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "I give this land to your offspring, from the brook of

Egypt to the Euphrates River: the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaim, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites."

Notice that only God walked through the pieces of animal carcass that had been put down. This shows us that God was the covenant keeper; He would keep His promises regardless of whether the people did, because He knew they couldn't.

Samuel used his farewell address to remind Israel again of God's faithfulness. God never leaves us in our sin but calls us to action: "Above all, fear the LORD and worship Him faithfully with all your heart; consider the great things He has done for you. However, if you continue to do what is evil, both you and your king will be swept away" (1 Sam. 12:24-25).

## SESSION 6

# JUDGED

## 1 SAMUEL 15:7-15,22-23

<sup>7</sup> Then Saul struck down the **Amalekites**<sup>a</sup> from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is next to Egypt. <sup>8</sup> He captured Agag king of Amalek alive, but he **completely destroyed all the rest of the people with the sword.**<sup>b</sup> <sup>9</sup> Saul and the troops spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, cattle, and choice animals, as well as the young rams and **the best of everything else.**<sup>c</sup> They were not willing to destroy them, but they did destroy all the worthless and unwanted things.

<sup>10</sup> Then **the word of the LORD**<sup>d</sup> came to Samuel,

<sup>11</sup> “**I regret**<sup>e</sup> that I made Saul king, for he has turned away from following Me and **has not carried out My instructions.**”<sup>f</sup> So Samuel became angry and cried out to the LORD all night. <sup>12</sup> Early in the morning Samuel got up to confront Saul, but it was reported to Samuel, “Saul went to **Carmel**<sup>g</sup> where he **set up a monument for himself.**”<sup>h</sup> Then he turned around and went down to Gilgal.” <sup>13</sup> When Samuel came to him, Saul said, “May the LORD bless you. I have **carried out the LORD’s instructions.**”<sup>i</sup> <sup>14</sup> Samuel replied, “Then what is this sound of sheep and cattle I hear?” <sup>15</sup> Saul answered, “The troops brought them from the Amalekites and spared the best sheep and cattle in order to offer a **sacrifice to the LORD your God,**<sup>j</sup> but the rest we destroyed.”  
... <sup>22</sup> Then Samuel said: **Does the LORD take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD?**<sup>k</sup> Look: to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** The Amalekites opposed Israel coming out of Egypt (v. 2) and God was judging them.
- b** In 1 Samuel 15:1-3, God commanded Saul to destroy everyone and everything.
- c** “Everything, in fact, that appealed to them” (NLT)
- d** This is a common Old Testament wording for when God speaks to His messenger. God’s word had several purposes: (1) prophetic, addressing humans and demanding a response; (2) legal, such as when Moses received the covenant law (Ex. 20:1; 24:3-8), and also demanding a response: faithful obedience; and (3) creative, as when God created the world (Gen. 1), directs nature (Ps. 147:15), saves (Ps. 107:20), and gives life (Ezek. 37:1-4).
- e** The Hebrew term is *nacham*, which has the connotation of being sorry or grieved.
- f** Saul kept all the best (v. 9) in blatant disobedience to God’s command.
- g** A mountain near Hebron
- h** Saul was prideful about “fulfilling” the command of God.
- i** When Samuel went to confront Saul, Saul didn’t realize that he had broken the command of God.
- j** Saul justified in his own mind acting outside of the command God gave him because he was giving it back to God.
- k** Samuel used this rhetorical question to help Saul see the mistake he made. Obedience was more important than what Saul thought God would want him to do.

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attention is better than the fat of rams.

**23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and defiance is like wickedness and idolatry.<sup>1</sup>**

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has **rejected you as king.<sup>m</sup>**

**l** "Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols" (NLT). "Not doing what God tells you is far worse than fooling around in the occult. Getting self-important around God is far worse than making deals with your dead ancestors" (MSG).

**m** Saul dishonored God by his disobedience, and in the end, would ultimately be replaced as king as a result.

## TALKING POINTS

### NOTES

### » SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE (1 Sam. 15:7-9)

- God had commanded King Saul to completely defeat the Amalekites and destroy their possessions, but Saul chose to spare the Amalekite king and the best of the animals.

### » SAMUEL'S CONFRONTATION

(1 Sam. 15:10-15)

- God told Samuel of Saul's disobedience, so Samuel sought Saul to confront him.
- Saul attempted to justify his disobedience as an act of worship.
- Note: Emphasize the need to approach a person who is unwilling to follow God's direction with grace and a view toward repentance.

### » GOD'S REJECTION (1 Sam. 15:22-23)

- Samuel declared that Saul's disobedience led to his being rejected by God as king.
- Note: Although Saul was not immediately replaced, this act of disobedience was a consistent pattern that ultimately ended in Saul's demise.

### » SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- God expects complete obedience to His directives.
- Believers are to humbly confront leaders who blatantly disobey God.
- God is more concerned about obedience than our worship practices.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**Describe a time when you did a half-hearted job in some task you were assigned. What response would you have given to the one who assigned you the task?**

- We might be too busy, uninterested, unprepared, or lazy in not giving our best effort to a task.
- God calls believers to a life of complete obedience; we need to give this our whole-hearted effort. God will judge those who are disobedient.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 15:7-9

**Keeping the best animals after the battle was won seems like a smart idea, so why was it wrong?**

- God had commanded King Saul to completely defeat the Amalekites and destroy everything belonging to them. Choosing his own way, Saul decided to allow their king and the best of their animals to live.
- Note: Some might question why everything—men, women, children, animals—had to be destroyed. The Amalekites, nomadic tribesmen and descendants of Esau, had been enemies of Israel since the time of the exodus from Egypt. They had continued to wage war with the people of Israel using barbaric methods. God had been patient with the Amalekites for a long time while they continued to reject Him. Their promised punishment had finally come due.

**Is partial obedience really obedience? Why or why not?**

- Some might argue a little obedience is better than no obedience at all. For the Israelites, destroying “all the worthless and unwanted things” (v. 9) required no great sacrifice on their part. Saul decided that they could pick and choose what they wanted to obey.
- God desires we be “all in”—fully committed to serving and following Him.

### 1 SAMUEL 15:10-15

**How did Saul attempt to justify his disobedience? What was God’s response to the disobedience?**

- Saul tried to justify his disobedience by saying he kept the best animals in order to sacrifice them to God. God is more concerned with our obedience than our worship practices.
- The word “regret” in verse 11 with God as the subject also occurs in Genesis 6:7, when it describes God’s regret over making humanity.

**In what ways do we try to justify our disobedience?**

- Verse 11 describes how Saul “turned away from” following God. It describes a conscious decision to stop following God. Sometimes our disobedience is simply an unplanned wandering

down a slippery slope away from God. Other times it is a deliberate choice toward disobedience. Both are wrong.

- The Israelites had clamored to have a king like “all the other nations” (1 Sam. 8:20). They got what they asked for: a king who disobeyed God.
- Sometimes we justify our disobedience by calling it a more pleasant-sounding name. Sometimes we justify by comparing ourselves to other people. Both are disobedience in God’s eyes.

**When we see a fellow believer choosing disobedience, how can we approach that person redemptively, showing them grace?**

- God did not appoint us as judge or critic over each other. We should be models of God’s grace in approaching someone living in disobedience.
- God’s desire is that everyone repent and turn to Him in obedience—that should be our goal in all our conversations and actions.

### 1 SAMUEL 15:22-23

**What was the result of Saul’s disobedience in refusing to destroy the Amalekites?**

- Samuel delivered the message that God had rejected Saul as king.
- Partial obedience is disobedience in God’s eyes—as Samuel described saying, “to obey is better than sacrifice” (v. 22).

**How does our disobedience contribute to our being set aside by God?**

- We did nothing to earn our salvation, and we cannot lose it. Yet our disobedience can result in our being removed from useful service to God. We discard our usefulness through our disobedience.
- People who struggle with repeated, ongoing disobedience against God and His people should evaluate whether they ever really made a true commitment to God in the first place.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

**How can we encourage each other toward complete obedience to God in every area of life?**

- Sometimes we are more inclined to criticism than encouragement in our relationships.
- Let’s be each other’s best cheerleaders—praying, encouraging, and lifting each other up so we are all stronger in pursuing total obedience to God.
- **Personal Challenge:** Evaluate your words, thoughts, and actions this week. Ask yourself if God is getting your best. Make total obedience to Him your goal in every situation.

## A DOG PHOTO

If you have a dog, bring a picture of him or her to the session (or enlist someone to bring a picture of their dog). Discuss the dog and how well he or she obeys. (Ex.: *How obedient is the dog? Is he mostly obedient or mostly disobedient?*) Note: *As humans, we sometimes struggle with obedience issues too.* Transition: *Today, we will talk about King Saul and what it means to be truly obedient to God.*

Call for someone to read aloud 1 Samuel 15:7-9. Explain that God's instructions to Saul called for him to totally destroy the Amalekites and all their possessions. Ask: *What went wrong? What's wrong with partial obedience in our relationship with God?* Affirm that God always desires our complete obedience to Him.

Direct a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 15:10-15. Point out that when Samuel confronted Saul, Saul attempted to justify his disobedience as an act of worship by lying and saying he kept the best animals from the Amalekites to offer as a sacrifice to God. Ask: *What kinds of excuses do we use to defend our disobedience? In light of all God has done for us, how do our excuses sound?*



Read aloud 1 Samuel 15:22-23. Note that Samuel compared the sins of rebellion and arrogance to the sins of witchcraft and idolatry. Say: *The cost of disobedience for Saul was steep: God rejected Saul as king.* Ask: *In what ways is sin costly to us?*

Note: *God is more concerned with our obedience than our worship practices; we owe Him our best obedience, not our half-hearted efforts.*

## DIG DEEPER

### HALF-HEARTED OBEDIENCE

The reason God rejected Saul's kingship is directly related to Saul not following God's command. Some people may argue that the punishment outweighed the crime. Instead of Saul completely destroying the Amalekites, he allowed King Agag to live and kept the best stuff for the nation of Israel. One could argue that it was a waste to completely destroy the perfectly good possessions of the Amalekites. However, this is not the right perspective to take.

Joshua 7 tells the story of Israel and the battle of Jericho. They were commanded to take all the gold and silver and give it God, but Achan kept some for himself. In most cultures at this time it was OK to keep plunder from a victor—the spoils of war. However, God had given Israel, in both instances, very strict instructions. The problem occurs because they did not obey God, regardless of whether or not it was "that bad" of a thing to do. In both situations, God saw the need to reassert His lordship.

In Saul's case, just because God had allowed Israel to have a king did not excuse them from obeying God's command. Saul had failed to learn that God does not accept rituals without obedience. It was for this reason that Saul's authority as king was revoked.

The same type of thing happens today. It does not matter what the world deems as acceptable behavior. As believers, we are called by God to follow His Word precisely.

Joshua 7 reveals that Achan eventually confessed his sin against God and was stoned to death for his disobedience. Saul also confessed his transgressions (1 Sam. 15:24) and eventually lost his kingship as a result.

We should let these stories serve as a powerful lesson for us to carefully follow God's directions. We each have a choice whether we will obey God or obey man—remembering that what we choose determines what our life yields.

## SESSION 7

# ANOINTED!

## 1 SAMUEL 16:4-13

<sup>4</sup> Samuel did what the LORD **directed**<sup>a</sup> and went to Bethlehem. When the elders of the town met him, **they trembled**<sup>b</sup> and asked, “Do you come in peace?” <sup>5</sup> “In peace,” he replied. “I’ve come to sacrifice to the LORD. **Consecrate**<sup>c</sup> yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” Then he consecrated **Jesse and his sons**<sup>d</sup> and invited them to the sacrifice. <sup>6</sup> When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and said, “Certainly the LORD’s anointed one is here before Him.” <sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look **at his appearance or his stature**,<sup>e</sup> because I have rejected him. Man does not see what the LORD sees, **for man sees what is visible, but the LORD sees the heart.**”<sup>f</sup> <sup>8</sup> Jesse called Abinadab and presented him to Samuel. “The LORD hasn’t chosen this one either,” Samuel said. <sup>9</sup> Then Jesse presented Shammah, but Samuel said, “The LORD hasn’t chosen this one either.” <sup>10</sup> After Jesse presented seven of his sons to him, Samuel told Jesse, “The LORD hasn’t chosen any of these.” <sup>11</sup> Samuel asked him, “Are these all the sons you have?” “**There is still the youngest**,”<sup>g</sup> he answered, “but right now **he’s tending the sheep.**”<sup>h</sup> Samuel told Jesse, “Send for him. We won’t sit down to eat until he gets here.” <sup>12</sup> So Jesse sent for him. **He had beautiful eyes**<sup>i</sup> and a healthy, handsome appearance. Then the LORD said, “**Anoint him**,<sup>j</sup> for he is the one.” <sup>13</sup> So Samuel took the **horn of oil**,<sup>k</sup> anointed him in the presence of his brothers,

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** God told Samuel to go to Jesse of Bethlehem to select a new king for Israel from among his sons.
- b** Their trembling may indicate the prophets were afraid to face Saul’s wrath if they supported Samuel.
- c** Set aside exclusively for holy or sacred use
- d** Jesse was the descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the father of King David (Matt. 1:2-6). He had six other sons (1 Chron. 2:13-14).
- e** Refers to the physical appearance of Eliab; kings were thought to be tall, strong, and regal in their appearance—having a dominating physical presence in the sight of others.
- f** God discerns the true nature of man (Heb. 4:12).
- g** The youngest son received the least amount of recognition and inheritance from his father; he would be the most unlikely person to be recommended for a place of honor. Jesse did not even mention David until Samuel questioned him.
- h** In nomadic cultures, such work was often the task of young girls (Gen. 29:9).
- i** The eyes are thought to reveal the nature of a man’s heart since they are “the lamp of the body” (Matt. 6:22).
- j** This was an outward sign that represented God’s anointing of David to be the king of Israel; Samuel poured out the oil on David’s head while God poured out His Spirit on David’s heart.
- k** “Flask of olive oil” (NLT); a ram’s horn represents power and strength, which was symbolic of David’s kingdom, since he was the greatest warrior in the history of Israel.

(Continued on the next page)

and **the Spirit of the LORD took control of David**<sup>1</sup> from that day forward. Then Samuel set out and went to Ramah.

**I** The Holy Spirit filled David throughout his life, ensuring that David's heart would be inclined toward godliness.

## “” TALKING POINTS

### »» SAMUEL'S ASSIGNMENT

(1 Sam. 16:4-5)

- Directed by God, Samuel went to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the future king.

### »» GOD'S CRITERIA (1 Sam. 16:6-10)

- Samuel considered Eliab a perfect fit to serve as king.
- After God reminded him that the one who would be king would need to wholeheartedly follow Him, Samuel reviewed all the sons of Jesse presented to him.
- God did not select any of those present.

### »» DAVID'S SELECTION (1 Sam. 16:11-13)

- Jesse's youngest son, David, was summoned to the gathering.
- God directed Samuel to anoint David. Just as Saul had been empowered by the Holy Spirit, David was now empowered.
- Note: Explain the significance of the Holy Spirit coming upon David. Emphasize that it would be through the Spirit's empowerment that David would rule.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- God chooses leaders for His people.
- At times, believers' motives are more important than their actions.
- When we are called upon to lead, we can trust the Holy Spirit for guidance.

## NOTES



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**Tell about a time when you were lost. What did you do? Who/what did you turn to for help?**

- Most all of us have been lost at some point. Maybe you used a map, a GPS, or your intuition to figure your way out of the lostness.
- God has laid out a map for believers' lives—the Bible and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We don't have to figure it out by ourselves—God desires that we seek to follow Him daily.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 16:4-5

**Samuel quickly responded to God's instruction for him. Why is prompt obedience so important in our relationship with God?**

- God had rejected Saul as king of Israel. He sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint the next king.
- Samuel expressed his doubts and fears about his safety in doing this thing God instructed. But then, in obedience, Samuel headed out to Bethlehem.
- Our prompt obedience to God is a good indicator of our faith and trust in Him. We may have honest questions or doubts, but we trust God's best for our lives, so we obey without delay.

### 1 SAMUEL 16:6-10

**How does the way we view or judge each other differ from the way God sees us? What does it mean that the "LORD sees the heart" (v. 7)?**

- We sometimes view or judge each other by the outward things—dress, appearance, possessions, or position.
- Saul was a tall, impressive man (1 Sam. 9:1-2), yet his disobedience disqualified him from service (1 Sam. 13:14).
- People who knew David would likely have judged him unqualified for the position of king—too young and inexperienced. However, God looks at the inner man, the heart. In God's eyes David was the right man.

**It's possible Samuel felt discouraged as he met the sons of Jesse one by one and none of them was the right one. When have you felt there was no right answer in sight?**

**How can we learn to trust God more in those situations?**

- We might wonder if Samuel felt dismayed, thinking maybe he wasn't at the right house or with the right family.
- Sometimes we become discouraged when it feels like God is silent or His plan for our lives is not clear.
- Samuel was willing to trust that God's direction was true and right. This also gives us confidence that God is always true and right working in our lives.

- Recalling past examples of God's faithfulness and direction in our lives can give us courage and patience when the road ahead seems uncertain.

### 1 SAMUEL 16:11-13

**What role did Samuel have in choosing David as king? What role did God have? What role did the Holy Spirit have?**

- God worked through Samuel in choosing David to be king. David was God's choice.
- As Samuel anointed David with oil, signifying he was God's selection, the Spirit of God "took control of David." Through the power of the Spirit, David would rule.
- In Old Testament days, the Spirit of God was given to specific people to empower them to serve God in specific tasks. Today, we have the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit living in the hearts of all believers.

**How can we learn patience in waiting for God's plan to unfold in our own lives?**

- Samuel showed his patience in continuing to ask to meet the sons of Jesse until he knew he had found God's choice for king.
- We cannot let our impatience hurry God's timing. We need to trust Him and patiently wait for His will to unfold for our lives.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

**How are you doing in following God right now? How could you better follow Him? What can you do to have a heart that pleases God?**

- Following God is not measured by any score-keeping system. It's a lifetime of daily commitments to follow Christ and love others in the best ways possible.
- Following God means listening to the Holy Spirit speaking to you as you face fresh challenges each day.
- **Personal Challenge:** Ask yourself if you have a heart that pleases God. Focus on the daily disciplines that mold your heart to be pleasing to Him. Spend time reading and studying God's Word. Carve out time for prayer. Serve Him better through your church. Give Him first place in your life.

# OBJECT LESSON

## A ROAD MAP

Display a road map and a digital map on a smartphone. Ask for a show of hands which they prefer for finding their way to an unfamiliar location. Explain: *In order to successfully get somewhere we've never been before, we need to follow a map. In today's study, we will talk about following God as the road map for our lives.*

Read aloud 1 Samuel 16:4-5. Say: *God had given Samuel a big assignment: to anoint the next king of Israel. This involved Samuel's faithful obedience as God directed—small steps that were leading to something big. Ask: Explain whether you find it easier to obey God in the big things or small things. What could we do to encourage each other toward more complete obedience to God?*

Direct a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 16:6-10. Note that Samuel was looking at the outward appearances of Jesse's seven sons, not at the men's hearts. Ask: *What does it mean that "the LORD sees the heart" (v. 7)? What does God desire to see when He sees our hearts?*

Call for someone to read aloud 1 Samuel 16:11-13. Call attention to Samuel anointing David, signifying God's choice for the next king.



Note: *The Holy Spirit "took control of David from that day forward" (v. 13), guiding David as he served as king. Ask: As believers, we have the Holy Spirit living in us. What will our lives look like when the Holy Spirit has control in our hearts?*

Affirm that we can always trust the Holy Spirit for guidance as a trustworthy map for living.

## DIG DEEPER

### THE LORD'S ANOINTED

One of the great themes observed throughout Scripture is the sovereign choice of God. Though this subject is often connected with the sovereignty of God in salvation, we can also observe it in the outworking of God's purposes through individuals and nations.

God sometimes chooses to use a particular nation to accomplish His purpose. For example, there are many times in the Book of Judges that God moved the heart of a pagan king—such as King Eglon of Moab in Judges 3, drawing his armies into Israel to conquer the Israelites for worshiping false gods. Sometimes, God also chooses to use a particular individual to accomplish His purpose, such as when God sent Moses to be the deliverer of Israel in Exodus 3. In every case, the Bible is clear that it is God who calls, anoints, equips, and sends people out to accomplish His plan.

However, Scripture indicates that there is a clear distinction in God's choosing of individuals and nations to His service. While God may move in the hearts of the wicked in order to use them for His purposes, His call to the righteous is peculiar in that He often chooses the most unlikely candidate(s) to work out His plans. First Corinthians 1:26-29 tells us that God often chooses "what is foolish in the world to shame the wise" (v. 27), "what is weak

in the world to shame the strong," and "what is insignificant and despised in the world" to shame the proud "so that no one can boast in His presence" (vv. 28-29). God uses insignificant people to accomplish great and mighty works, so that everyone who sees them will bless God for His power and provision, rendering all the glory and honor to Him.

The unlikely choices of God are perhaps demonstrated most clearly in the story of David's anointing in 1 Samuel 16. David was the youngest son of Jesse, insignificant even in his father's eyes; he was weak in his youth, foolish in the eyes of the world because he was young, and perceived as the most unlikely person to ever experience greatness. Yet God chose to use David, calling him out of his lowly estate and exalting him to be the greatest king in the history of Israel. God even promised David that God's own Son, Jesus, would eternally rule Israel on David's throne (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

God still exercises His choice today, calling out individuals to serve Him and to accomplish His purposes; and when the movement of God's hand is evident in someone's life, praise and adoration must be given to God so that He alone may receive the glory that alone is due Him.

## SESSION 8

# DELIVERED

## 1 SAMUEL 17:32-37,42-50

<sup>32</sup> David said to Saul, “Don’t let anyone be discouraged by **him**;<sup>a</sup> **your servant**<sup>b</sup> will go and fight this Philistine!”<sup>33</sup> But Saul replied, “You can’t go fight this Philistine. **You’re just a youth**,<sup>c</sup> and he’s been a warrior since he was young.”<sup>34</sup> David answered Saul: “Your servant has been tending his father’s sheep. Whenever a lion or a bear came and carried off a lamb from the flock,<sup>35</sup> I went after it, struck it down, and rescued the lamb from its mouth. If it reared up against me, I would grab it by its fur, strike it down, and kill it.”<sup>36</sup> **Your servant has killed lions and bears;**<sup>d</sup> **this uncircumcised Philistine**<sup>e</sup> will be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.”<sup>37</sup> Then David said, “The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.” Saul said to David, “Go, and may the LORD be with you.” ...

<sup>42</sup> When the Philistine looked and saw David, he despised him because he was just a youth, healthy and handsome.<sup>43</sup> He said to David, “**Am I a dog that you come against me with sticks?**”<sup>f</sup> Then he cursed David by his gods.<sup>44</sup> “Come here,” the Philistine called to David, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts!”<sup>45</sup> David said to the Philistine: “You come against me with a **dagger, spear, and sword**,<sup>g</sup> but I come against you in the name of Yahweh of Hosts, the God of Israel’s armies—you have defied Him.”<sup>46</sup> Today, **the LORD will hand you over to me**.<sup>h</sup> Today, I’ll strike you down, cut your head off, and give the corpses of the Philistine camp to the birds of the sky and the creatures of the earth. Then all the world will know that Israel has a God,<sup>47</sup> and this whole assembly will know that **it is not by sword or by spear that the LORD saves**,<sup>i</sup> for the battle is the LORD’s. He will hand you over to us.”<sup>48</sup> When the Philistine started forward to attack him, **David ran quickly to the battle line**<sup>j</sup> to meet the Philistine.<sup>49</sup> David put his hand in the bag, took out a stone, slung it, and hit the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.<sup>50</sup> David defeated the Philistine with a sling and a stone. Even though David had no sword, he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** The nine-foot-tall Philistine warrior Goliath had distressed the Israelite army for 40 days, demanding that the Hebrews send a champion to fight him.
- b** Though already anointed as king, David’s use of this phrase indicated his recognition that Saul’s authority as king would remain until the Lord chose to remove it (1 Sam. 24:5-7).
- c** Saul lacked confidence in David’s ability to fight Goliath; David was young and inexperienced, while Goliath had been a warrior from his youth.
- d** David disputed Saul’s lack of confidence in his ability to fight by referring to his defeat of bears and lions while tending his father’s sheep.
- e** Here the word may also refer to the spiritual nature of Goliath since he was a pagan, meaning that he was in open rebellion against God (Acts 7:51).
- f** David was armed with his staff and sling, tools which were commonly carried by shepherds. Goliath mocked David’s weapons, deeming them just as unworthy of battle as David was unfit for combat.
- g** These were the common weapons carried by every combat soldier. Superior weapons were thought to give an advantage to the soldier who wielded them, and no one on the battlefield had stronger weapons than Goliath. However, David understood that the battle did not depend on mere physicality and thus refused to wear Saul’s armor.
- h** David was confident in God’s ability to win the battle. He did not need armor or mighty weapons to win; he only needed to be on the Lord’s side.
- i** God works salvation through those whom the world despises as weak, humble, and insignificant, so He might receive all the glory (1 Cor. 1:27-29).
- j** David ran out to meet Goliath quickly so that he would have time to prepare his sling.

## NOTES

### »» CONFIDENCE IN GOD

(1 Sam. 17:32-37)

- When questioned about his credentials to fight Goliath, David pointed to previous experiences and expressed confidence that God would empower him to defeat Goliath.

### »» FALSE CONFIDENCE IN HIMSELF

(1 Sam. 17:42-44)

- Goliath viewed David as an unworthy opponent and declared that the battle would be easily won.

### »» GOD'S VICTORY

(1 Sam. 17:45-50)

- David declared his confidence in God to give victory, explaining that God's power would then be made known as a result.
- God secured the victory by using David to kill Goliath and provide deliverance for Israel from the Philistines.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- God calls faithful followers to take a stand against those who oppose Him and His people.
- Confidence in anything other than God will lead to sure defeat.
- God gives His followers opportunities to make His name known.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

### When have you felt unprepared or ill-equipped for a job?

- Sometimes we feel unqualified for a job, whether it's simply because we lack confidence or we truly lack the skills needed for the task.
- Believers should never turn away from an opportunity to serve God because they lack confidence. Placing our confidence firmly in God, we know He will equip and prepare us for the task at hand.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 17:32-37

**How did David view his qualifications as a warrior? How did Saul see David? Do you tend to feel more like "a David" or "a Saul" when you experience challenges in life? Explain.**

- Saul viewed David as too young and inexperienced to be any challenge for Goliath. David had an unshakable confidence in his ability.
- Some might struggle with a lack of confidence in their abilities, while others have a bold confidence because of their relationship with God.

**In whom did David put his confidence? Name examples of the difference confidence in God can make in a person's life.**

- David may have lacked a soldier's training, but he was an experienced fighter because of his time spent in the wilderness protecting sheep. Equipped with this experience, David displayed a sure confidence in God's ability to protect him.
- When we place our confidence in anything other than God, it leads to defeat. As believers, we should face all challenges with our confidence rightly grounded in the truth of the gospel.
- Having confidence in God made all the difference for David. We have that same confidence available to us if we are willing to trust in His Son.

### 1 SAMUEL 17:42-44

**How did Goliath view David? Why did he despise David?**

- Not only did Goliath have an exaggerated confidence in his own ability as a warrior, he "despised" David. He scorned David because of his youth, his health, and his handsome looks.

**What was Goliath's "trash talk" against David?**

- Goliath suggested that David's staff was nothing more than a stick used to beat a dog.
- Next Goliath "cursed David by his gods" (v. 43). This was more than just a fight between two men. It represented a battle between the false gods of the Philistines and the one true God of Israel.

- David did not waver when Goliath's curses rained down on him; his faith rested securely in God's mighty power.
- If we've ever struggled with lack of confidence, David is a model for us of the strength available when we place our confidence in God, not our own abilities.

### 1 SAMUEL 17:45-50

**David gave God the credit for the victory over Goliath. Consider some major successes in your life. How hard or easy was it for you to give God the credit?**

- Goliath put his confidence in his "dagger, spear, and sword" (v. 45). David's confidence rested in "the name of Yahweh of Hosts, the God of Israel's armies."
- Goliath had a false confidence in himself; David had a sure confidence in God; this made all the difference.
- It can be an easy trap to want to take all the credit for our victories and successes in life. We must constantly remind ourselves that all we are and have comes from God.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

**David used a battle with a giant as an opportunity to make God's name known in the world. Where and how can you make God's name known today?**

- David said that because of his victory over Goliath, "all the world will know that Israel has a God" (v. 46). Remember, this was much more than just a fight between two men.
- We can be intentional about giving God the credit in our lives, both in the words we speak and in the way we live.
- We find the theme of making God's name known woven throughout the Old and New Testament (Ps. 105:1; Isa. 52:6; Ezek. 39:7; John 17:26).
- **Personal Challenge:** When we are making God's name known, it will be part of our activities at home, in the workplace, and where we play. His name is not reserved for Sunday mornings. Look for fresh ways to make God's name known in your daily conversations this coming week.

## A HELP-WANTED AD

Call for volunteers to respond to these questions: *What was the first job you ever had? What skills were required?* Display the help-wanted ads from a newspaper. Read aloud some job requirements/qualifications. Say: *In today's study, we'll look at the David and Goliath story. Think about David's qualifications as we explore these Scriptures together.*

Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 17:32-37. Point out that Saul looked at Goliath and saw a large, muscular man, experienced in military battles. He saw David as a youth, with no military experience at all. Say: *David trusted in a big God, who had protected him in the past.* Ask: *What standards does the world use to judge people as qualified and successful? What does God see in people qualified to serve Him?* Say: *Unlike those job ads in the newspaper, when God calls us to do a job, He equips us to serve Him.*

Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 17:42-44. Note that Goliath saw this battle as a fight against a despised, weaker opponent. Ask: *What did Goliath see when he looked at David? Goliath had misplaced confidence in himself. Where was David's*



*confidence?* Stress that if our confidence is in anything other than God, then it's a misplaced confidence.

Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 17:45-50. Ask: *What was David's goal in fighting Goliath? Where could God be looking to use us today?* Affirm that if we're willing to do our part, God will provide the opportunities for us to make His name known.

## DIG DEEPER

### FINDING STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

In the story of David and Goliath, a small, young, insignificant shepherd boy who was the epitome of weakness walked fearlessly onto a battlefield and swiftly defeated the man who was likely the greatest soldier in the history of the Philistine army. He entered the battle without armor and without a sword, thoroughly unequipped for warfare in the eyes of every soldier within sight. However, he brought a sling and five smooth stones, which happened to be the only tools the Lord required.

Goliath came out in full armor with a sword and spear and made a mockery of David. Yet in the midst of the taunting, David made it clear that he had come to fight in the name of the Lord, and that made all the difference. Goliath, the strongest soldier in the entire Bible, came to the battle in his own strength while David, the weak shepherd boy, came to the battle in the strength of the Lord. With the simple toss of one smooth stone, David's weakness overcame Goliath's strength, and the battle was won. The reason for David's success can be found in this single statement he made to Goliath: "it is not by sword or by spear that the LORD saves, for the battle is the LORD's. He will hand you over to us" (1 Sam. 17:47). David understood that the Lord only strengthens those who rely on His

power in the midst of their weakness. The battle belonged to the Lord, so David chose to stand against Goliath in the Lord's name and power.

Perhaps the best illustration of God using the weak is the story of Peter walking on the water (Matt. 14:22-32). Peter had no power whatsoever to conquer the storm, but as long as his eyes were fixed on Jesus, he had power to stand amidst the tumult.

If we would find strength, then we must rely on the power of the Lord which only comes to us by faithfulness and full devotion to Jesus Christ. This is what the apostle Paul meant when he said, "I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, catastrophes, persecutions, and in pressures, because of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10).

## SESSION 9

# FAITHFUL

## 1 SAMUEL 18:1-5; 20:35-42

<sup>1</sup> When David had finished speaking with Saul, Jonathan **committed himself to David**,<sup>a</sup> and loved him as much as he loved himself. <sup>2</sup> Saul kept David with him from that day on and did not let him return to his father's house. <sup>3</sup> Jonathan **made a covenant**<sup>b</sup> with David **because he loved him as much as himself**.<sup>c</sup> <sup>4</sup> Then Jonathan removed the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his military tunic, his sword, his bow, and his belt. <sup>5</sup> David marched out with the army and was successful in everything Saul sent him to do. Saul put him in command of the soldiers, **which pleased all the people and Saul's servants as well**.<sup>d</sup> ... <sup>35</sup> In the morning Jonathan went out to the field for **the appointed meeting**<sup>e</sup> with David. **A small young man**<sup>f</sup> was with him. <sup>36</sup> He said to the young man, "Run and find the arrows I'm shooting." As the young man ran, Jonathan shot an arrow beyond him. <sup>37</sup> He came to the location of the arrow that Jonathan had shot, but Jonathan called to him and said, "**The arrow is beyond you, isn't it?**"<sup>g</sup> <sup>38</sup> Then Jonathan called to him, "Hurry up and don't stop!" Jonathan's young man picked up the arrow and returned to his master. <sup>39</sup> He did not know anything; only Jonathan and David knew the arrangement. <sup>40</sup> Then Jonathan gave his equipment to the young man who was with him and said, "Go, take it back to the city." <sup>41</sup> When the young man had gone, David got up from the south side of **the stone Ezel**,<sup>h</sup> fell with his face to the ground, and

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** "Became one in spirit with David" (NIV)
- b** Jonathan's and David's friendship covenant acknowledged David's right to the throne.
- c** Jonathan's love for David is the embodiment of Christ's command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39).
- d** The king's slaves and his servants were pleased by David's leadership, which certainly frustrated Saul. The respect and honor David received was a testament to the work of God in David's life.
- e** David and Jonathan had previously arranged this meeting. Jonathan was to discover Saul's intentions concerning David's life and safely communicate the information to David (1 Sam. 20:1-24).
- f** This signifies a young, insignificant male servant. Jonathan probably chose such a servant so that the young man's testimony would not be regarded in the event that he discovered David's whereabouts.
- g** The code phrase that Jonathan had given David during their secret meeting the day before, it indicated that David should flee the city because Saul was seeking to harm him (1 Sam. 19:18-24).
- h** There is no mention of the stone of Ezel anywhere else in the Bible. However, it was likely a sort of memorial or marker stone in the vicinity of Saul's residence during the time of David. Such monuments were commonplace and well known to the people who lived nearby.

*(Continued on the next page)*

**bowed three times.**<sup>i</sup> Then he and Jonathan **kissed each other**<sup>j</sup> and wept with each other, though David wept more. <sup>42</sup> Jonathan then said to David, **“Go in the assurance**<sup>k</sup> the two of us pledged in the name of the LORD when we said: The LORD will be a witness between you and me and between my offspring and your offspring forever.” Then David left, and Jonathan went into the city.

**i** The language indicated that he probably did this with great fear and passion because Jonathan had provided him a way of escape from Saul.

**j** A common greeting sign between close friends

**k** Literally “go in peace.” Jonathan and David would remain friends, based on what they pledged in the name of the Lord.

## “” TALKING POINTS

### » TRUE FRIENDS (1 Sam. 18:1-5)

- David found a faithful friend in Jonathan (Saul’s son), who was willing to place David above his own ambitions.
- Jonathan presented his royal robe and other items to David as a demonstration of his commitment to David.

### » TESTED FRIENDS (1 Sam. 20:35-40)

- Jonathan used arrows to signal to David that his life was in danger.
- The arrow demonstration was prearranged, with its significance going undetected by all other parties.

### » TIMELESS FRIENDS (1 Sam. 20:41-42)

- David and Jonathan said their goodbyes and committed to be friends no matter what happened in the future.
- Emphasize that their friendship was based on a mutual trust and belief in God.

### » SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Godly friendship is not self-centered and seeks the best for others.
- True friendship is based on mutual trust and faithfulness.
- We can be thankful that Christ promises never to leave or forsake us, being a Friend for eternity.

## NOTES



## FOCUS ATTENTION

### What qualities do you value most in a friend?

- Our answers may vary some, but we probably find friends who are trustworthy, honest, dependable, kind, funny, and share common interests with us.
- Today's study reminds us that faithful friends are gifts from God, and true friendship is based on mutual trust and faithfulness.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 18:1-5

#### Where do you see evidence here of the friendship commitment David and Jonathan had for each other?

- Jonathan and David had reason to be enemies or at least rivals. Jonathan was heir to the throne by his bloodline. David was God's choice to be next king. But instead of letting this rivalry drive a wedge between them, they became the closest of friends.
- Verse 1 literally means "Jonathan's life was bound together with David's."
- The phrase "loved him as much as he loved himself" in verses 1,3 describes Jonathan's love for David. It could be translated "as much as he loved his own life." They demonstrated godly friendship, always seeking the best for the other person.

#### What does it take to create and maintain a great friendship?

- Making and keeping good friends requires effort from both people, but good friends are well worth it.
- We have to work to carve out the time in our hectic schedules that friendship requires.
- Note: With social media so prevalent today, we might have loads of people we call "friends." Discuss whether we have cheapened the meaning of "friend" by using it to describe social media connections.

### 1 SAMUEL 20:35-40

#### How did Jonathan show his concern/care for David?

- Saul was pursuing David to kill him. Jonathan and David met secretly. Jonathan promised to send a warning to David if he found out Saul's threats of murder were really true.
- Jonathan secretly signaled David via an arrow shot from a bow that Saul was intent on killing him.
- Jonathan must have felt torn between loyalty to his father and loyalty to his friend. Though harshly tested, Jonathan's and David's friendship remained true.

#### When have you protected a friend from harm? When has a friend protected you?

- Although we don't have murderous kings chasing our friends, there are times when they need protection.

- There are many ways to protect our friendships. Friends can protect each other from gossip and untruths, from stumbling into temptation and sin, from discouragement, and from unwise decisions.

#### Jonathan and David cared for and trusted each other. How can you strengthen the care and trust in your friendships?

- If you invest in your friends by showing kindness, being available, forgiving, listening well, seeking the best for the other person, then you strengthen your friendships and demonstrate to others the way to be a friend.

### 1 SAMUEL 20:41-42

#### What promises did Jonathan and David make to each other?

- Jonathan and David wept and kissed each other good-bye, a common farewell between close friends in that culture.
- They promised friendship to each other and that their friendship would carry over to their offspring.
- David kept this promise. After Jonathan's death, David found Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, and brought him to live in his court, where he enjoyed the privileges of being part of the king's family (2 Sam. 9:1-10).

#### What do you think were key ingredients in Jonathan's and David's strong friendship?

- Love, trust, and loyalty were all key ingredients in the friendship. Both men shared a commitment to God.
- All of these qualities demonstrate a godly, selfless friendship that always seeks the best for the other person.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

#### What lessons can you learn from Jonathan and David that can help you become a better friend?

- They guarded their friendship against jealousy and rivalry, sought the best for the other person, and built the relationship on mutual trust and faithfulness.
- They didn't allow challenges to pull their friendship apart.
- As humans, we sometimes let down our friends or vice versa. But we can always depend on Christ, who will never leave us or forsake us.
- **Personal Challenge:** Think of your best friend (or friends). Thank God for this faithful friend, who is truly a gift from God. Commit to pray regularly for that friend, if you aren't already doing so.

# OBJECT LESSON

## A PHOTO OF YOU AND A FRIEND

Show the photo and talk about the qualities you admire in your friend. Call for volunteers to name some of the qualities they admire in their friends. Explain: *In today's study, we'll examine a model friendship and talk about how we can be the friends God calls us to be.*

Remind the group that Saul was the king, Jonathan was Saul's son, and David was the young man God had chosen to be the next king. Jonathan and David were best friends. Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 18:1-5. Ask: *What evidence do we see here of Jonathan and David's strong friendship? Why are mutual trust and faithfulness so important to a friendship?* Note that Jonathan valued his friendship with David above his own personal ambitions.

Explain that Jonathan and David had devised a plan to alert David of danger. Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 20:35-40. Say: *At some risk to himself, Jonathan signaled to David that his life was in danger. Saul was jealous and angry, and he was looking for David.* Acknowledge that many of us might know of friendships that dissolved during difficult times. Ask: *How can we guard/protect our friendships when one or both of us experiences hardships?*



Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 20:41-42. Point out that Jonathan and David knew they could not see each other again, yet they promised faithfulness to each other and to each other's children. Ask: *What steps can you take to be a better friend to your friends today?* Affirm that godly friendship is never self-centered and always seeks the best for others.

## DIG DEEPER

### TRUE FRIENDSHIP

Friendship is a bond of mutual trust, support, benevolence, and genuine concern between individuals. Perhaps it is best summarized by the action Christ required in the two greatest commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. ... The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37,39).

Considering these commandments, the truest friend would be the one whose love for God motivated his love for his brother, leading him to place the interest of his brother before his own in all things. Honestly, the only person who ever perfectly demonstrated that kind of love was the Lord Jesus. Indeed, Jesus said, "No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13), which Jesus then did, thus proving His love for His friends to be the truest measure of friendship.

Outside of our Lord, however, a great example of friendship is the relationship between David and Jonathan. In 1 Samuel 18, the Bible says that "Jonathan committed himself to David, and loved him as much as he loved himself" (v. 1). From that day forward, Jonathan certainly acted in David's best interest at all times. He loved him, provided for him, praised his success, interceded for him before Saul, and even risked his own life to keep David safe. In 1 Samuel 20,

we read that Jonathan even met with David in secret in order to preserve his life, allowing David to become a fugitive rather than suffering his death at the hands of Saul.

For the Christian, the examples of Christ's love for His people and Jonathan's love for David are meant to demonstrate the nature of a true, honest, and intimate relationship. For many of us, that kind of relationship can be found with our spouse. In a godly marriage, a husband and wife love each other unconditionally, care for one another, and put each other's needs before their own. It is a relationship built on mutual, loving sacrifice. While many of us experience that in marriage, we must not forget that true and abiding friendships also can be experienced with coworkers, family members, classmates, and others within our spheres of influence. We just need to practice Christ's commandments with a genuine heart, allowing God to lead us into the right relationships.

David's friendship with Jonathan saved his life. What could a friendship like that do for you?

## SESSION 10

# BLINDED

## 1 SAMUEL 22:6-17

<sup>6</sup> Saul heard that David and his men had been **discovered**.<sup>a</sup> At that time Saul was in Gibeah, sitting under the tamarisk tree at the high place. **His spear was in his hand**,<sup>b</sup> and all his servants were standing around him. <sup>7</sup> Saul said to his servants, “Listen, **men of Benjamin**:<sup>c</sup> **Is Jesse’s son going to give all of you fields and vineyards? Do you think he’ll make all of you commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds?**”<sup>d</sup> <sup>8</sup> That’s why all of you have conspired against me! Nobody tells me when my own son makes a covenant with Jesse’s son. None of you cares about me or tells me that my son has stirred up my own servant to wait in ambush for me, as is the case today.” <sup>9</sup> Then **Doeg the Edomite**,<sup>e</sup> who was in charge of Saul’s servants, answered: “I saw Jesse’s son come to **Ahimelech son of Ahitub**<sup>f</sup> at Nob. <sup>10</sup> Ahimelech inquired of the LORD for him and gave him provisions. He also gave him **the sword of Goliath the Philistine**.”<sup>g</sup> <sup>11</sup> The king sent messengers to summon Ahimelech the priest, son of Ahitub, and his father’s whole family, who were priests in Nob. All of them came to the king. <sup>12</sup> Then Saul said, “Listen, son of Ahitub!” “I’m at your service, my lord,” he said. <sup>13</sup> Saul asked him, “Why did you and Jesse’s son conspire against me? You gave him bread and a sword and inquired of God for him, so he could rise up against me and wait in ambush, as is the case today.” <sup>14</sup> Ahimelech replied to the king: “**Who among all your servants is as faithful as David?**”<sup>h</sup> He is the king’s son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard, and **honored in your house**.<sup>i</sup> <sup>15</sup> Was today the first time I inquired of God for him? Of course not! Please don’t let the king make an **accusation**<sup>j</sup> against your servant or any of my father’s household, for your servant didn’t have any idea about all this.” <sup>16</sup> But the king said, “**You will die, Ahimelech—you and your father’s whole family!**”<sup>k</sup> <sup>17</sup> Then the king ordered the guards standing by him, “Turn and kill the priests of the LORD because they sided with David. For they knew he was fleeing, but they didn’t tell me.” **But the king’s servants would not lift a hand to execute the priests of the LORD.**<sup>l</sup>

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** While David was hiding in Hereth, Saul’s chief servant informed Saul that David had visited the priests at Nob and received aid from them.
- b** This indicated Saul’s readiness for battle at a moment’s notice, possibly related both to his anger with David and his fear of David’s skill in combat.
- c** Saul’s servants were from his own tribe.
- d** Saul asked rhetorical questions to challenge their beliefs that David, as king, would appoint them to positions of authority.
- e** Doeg was the chief herdsman of Saul who saw the priests at Nob giving aid to David (1 Sam. 21:7).
- f** Ahimelech was the chief priest who gave David consecrated bread from the temple to eat, and who armed David with Goliath’s sword (1 Sam. 21:1-9).
- g** Considered the greatest sword in the kingdom then, David’s possession of it gave him a distinct combat advantage in the eyes of Saul and his army.
- h** Jonathan also confirmed to Saul that no one was as faithful as David (1 Sam. 19:4-5).
- i** David’s position as son-in-law in Saul’s family, personal bodyguard, and his rapport among Saul’s family should have demonstrated that he was trustworthy and would not seek to usurp Saul’s throne. Yet Saul’s anger and paranoia blinded him to the truth about David’s character and integrity.
- j** Saul was laying the blame on Ahimelech, who was innocent (1 Sam. 21–22).
- k** Eighty five priests were killed that day; only Ahimelech’s son, Abiathar, escaped to David’s camp (1 Sam. 22:20-21).
- l** It’s likely the servants feared they would suffer the wrath of God if they raised their hands against the priests.

### »» PURSUED BY SAUL

(1 Sam. 22:6-10)

- Saul discovered David's whereabouts and pursued him with an army.
- Playing on the emotions of his servants, Saul received information about David's movements, with Ahimelech being singled out.

### »» GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

(1 Sam. 22:11-15)

- Saul accused Ahimelech of participating in a political conspiracy.
- Ahimelech admitted to helping David as he had done on many previous occasions, but claimed to do so in good faith and not as part of a conspiracy against Saul.
- Note: Emphasize that not all adversity is the result of our own sin.

### »» DESPERATE MEASURES

(1 Sam. 22:16-17)

- Saul called for the death of the priests because he perceived them as being loyal to David.
- When the order was given, the king's servants refused to carry out his command.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- When left unchecked, personal ambition can lead to sin and destruction.
- Believers may face opposition simply for doing the right thing.
- Believers need to stand against laws that violate God's laws and principles.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**How can personal ambition negatively impact a good team? A workplace environment? A family?**

- We have seen examples where one person's unchecked ambition can sour or even tear apart a team, a workplace, or a family. Like a disease in the body, unchecked ambition can spread, overtaking the healthy parts.
- Today we'll see how personal ambition drove Saul to desperate actions. We'll also see how, as believers, sometimes opposition confronts us, even when we're simply doing the right thing.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 22:6-10

**How did Saul's jealousy and ambition lead to his desperate accusations? How could unchecked ambition lead to desperate behavior in our lives?**

- David was on the run hiding from Saul, whose paranoia was growing. Saul was so jealous of David that he questioned the loyalty of his closest soldiers, accusing them of betraying him and aiding David.
- Saul falsely accused his own son Jonathan of plotting against him. This accusation was untrue; Jonathan would die fighting alongside his father.
- Doeg, the head of Saul's servants, told Saul that David had consulted with Ahimelech the priest.
- If our ambition is unchecked, we become self-centered in our attitudes and actions. We don't value other people as we should. We are consumed with pursuing our own selfish desires. Sinful behavior always leads to destruction.

### 1 SAMUEL 22:11-15

**What false accusations did King Saul hurl toward Ahimelech the priest? How did Ahimelech respond?**

- Saul accused Ahimelech the priest of siding with David in conspiring against him. Saul's accusations suggested that Ahimelech was guilty of treason against him. Yet it's more likely that David would have kept Ahimelech ignorant of the real purpose of his visit, so the priest could claim ignorance.
- Ahimelech did not deny Saul's accusations, but he defended David as being loyal to Saul.
- Any help that Ahimelech provided to David was with good intentions and not out of any desire to harm Saul. Ahimelech was certainly not trying to betray Saul.

**Ahimelech faced opposition simply for doing the right thing in helping David. As a believer, when have you faced opposition for doing the right thing?**

- Sometimes we experience opposition because of our own sin. We bring trouble on ourselves.

- Not all adversity is the result of our own sin. Bad things do happen to believers who are simply doing the right thing.
- Even in the face of opposition, we can trust in God's strong presence in our lives.

### 1 SAMUEL 22:16-17

**What does the punishment declared by King Saul reveal about him? What does his servants' reactions reveal about him?**

- Saul's shocking behavior continued as he ordered a death sentence for Ahimelech and his whole family. This sentence resulted from Saul's mistaken thinking that Ahimelech was a traitor.
- The king's trusted servants refused to follow Saul's execution order for Ahimelech and his family. They refused to harm "the priests of the LORD" (v. 17).
- As believers, we must be willing to take a stand against anything that violates God's laws and principles.

**How do we see King Saul's unchecked ambition lead to sin and destruction?**

- Saul's ambition hurt his relationships, even within his own family.
- Because of his ambition, Saul sinned greatly, even to the point of trying to murder anyone he considered a rival, and he had poor judgment in deciding who was his rival.
- Saul's disobedience to God led him to kill Agag and to lose his kingdom and position as king.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

**Is all ambition bad? How can we guard against unchecked ambition in our own lives?**

- Not all ambition is bad. Channeled in a positive way, ambition helps us pursue the education, training, and careers we need to do well in life. With ambition we provide for our families and take on responsibilities in our churches and communities.
- With unchecked ambition, we lose perspective and become self-centered.
- If we give God first place in our lives and seek Him with our whole hearts, then our ambitions will have a proper balance in our lives.
- **Personal Challenge:** In the coming week, look to put the needs of others first and your own second—whether at home or in the workplace. In doing this, you will be adopting a more Christ-like attitude in all your conversations and interactions with others.

## A PAIR OF SUNGLASSES

Wear a pair of sunglasses as the group arrives. Comment about how different things look while you're wearing the sunglasses. (Ex.: The room seems darker. There's less glare.) Explain: *In the same way sunglasses change the way we see the world around us, unchecked ambition distorts everything in our lives.*

Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 22:6-10. Explain: *Saul was so jealous of David that he led his army in pursuit of David to kill him. Ask: How do we see Saul's ambition blinding him in this conversation with his servants?*

Read aloud 1 Samuel 22:11-15, noting how Saul summoned Ahimelech the priest for questioning. Ask: *How do we see Saul's ambition blinding him in this conversation with Ahimelech?* Point out that Saul conducted his own "trial," falsely accusing Ahimelech of conspiring against him. Ahimelech admitted that he had helped David, but that he intended no harm to Saul. Say: *Unchecked ambition affects our view of life and can keep us from seeing the truth—as we see in Saul's behavior.*



Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 22:16-17. Explain: *Without any evidence that Ahimelech had committed a crime, Saul sentenced the priest and his whole family to death. Lead the group to discuss the following questions: As believers, how do we keep the appropriate balance of ambition in our lives? How do we guard against ambition affecting our view of life and leading to sin?*

## DIG DEEPER

### INTEGRITY

According to *Merriam-Webster*, *integrity* is the "firm adherence to a code of especially moral ... values." Biblically speaking, it is one of the distinguishing characteristics of a true Christian. When we think of integrity, most of us think of a person having the same character at all times—acting the same in public as in private. Integrity, however, encompasses far more than our "who are you when no one is watching" mantra. To be a person of integrity is to hold fast to the same morals and values in every circumstance. For the Christian, real integrity encompasses two overarching moral values: honesty and fairness.

First, Scripture plainly teaches us to be honest at all times, never bearing false witness or lying because that is characteristic of Satan, who is called "the accuser" (Rev. 12:10) and "the father of liars" (John 8:44). God is the "God of truth" (Ps. 31:5), meaning that all forms of falsehood dishonor Him. We are to be honest in all our conduct, always adhering to the truth as our moral standard, regardless of our circumstances.

Secondly, Scripture instructs us to be fair. Since God "doesn't show favoritism" (Acts 10:34), we should not give partiality to anyone.

If then we desire to be people of integrity, our honesty must extend to every individual we meet regardless of his or her status, race, affluence, influence, or any other social qualifier we might encounter. We are to be unashamedly truthful and fair in every circumstance. Such was the life of David.

David had built such a reputation among Saul's household that he was honored by everyone and thoroughly trusted. Even Ahimelech, under threat of death, answered Saul saying, "Who among all your servants is as faithful as David?" (1 Sam. 22:14). Ahimelech's testimony doesn't speak of David's character, position, or success in battle because those qualities weren't the things that built him up in the eyes of the people. The people loved David because of the integrity of his heart.

If we strive for personal integrity as both a motivation for and an extension of our Christianity, we will "find favor and high regard in the sight of God and man" (Prov. 3:4), just as David did.

## SESSION 11

# PROTECTED

## 1 SAMUEL 25:14-17,32-38

<sup>14</sup> One of Nabal's<sup>a</sup> young men informed Abigail,<sup>b</sup> Nabal's wife: "Look, David sent messengers<sup>c</sup> from the wilderness to greet our master, but he yelled at them. <sup>15</sup> **The men treated us well.**<sup>d</sup> When we were in the field, we weren't harassed and nothing of ours was missing the whole time we were living among them. <sup>16</sup> **They were a wall around us,**<sup>e</sup> **both day and night,**<sup>f</sup> the entire time we were herding the sheep. <sup>17</sup> Now consider carefully what you must do, because there is certain to be trouble for our master and his entire family. He is such a **worthless fool**<sup>g</sup> nobody can talk to him!" ... <sup>32</sup> Then David said to Abigail, "Praise to the LORD God of Israel, who sent you to meet me today! <sup>33</sup> **Your discernment is blessed,**<sup>h</sup> and you are blessed. Today you kept me from participating in bloodshed and **avenging myself by my own hand.**<sup>i</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Otherwise, as surely as the LORD God of Israel lives, who prevented me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, Nabal wouldn't have had any men left by morning light." <sup>35</sup> Then David accepted what she had brought him and said, "**Go home in peace.**<sup>j</sup> See, I have heard what you said and have granted your request." <sup>36</sup> Then Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was in his house, holding a feast fit for a king. Nabal was in a good mood and very drunk, so she didn't say anything to him until morning light. <sup>37</sup> In the morning when Nabal sobered up, his wife told him about these events. Then he had a seizure and became paralyzed.

<sup>38</sup> About 10 days later, **the LORD struck Nabal dead.**<sup>k</sup>

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** A personal name meaning "fool" or "rude"
- b** A personal name meaning "my father rejoiced"; Abigail was praised for her wisdom in contrast to Nabal, her arrogant and overbearing husband.
- c** David sent 10 men to request food and supplies from Nabal (vv. 4-8).
- d** One of Nabal's slaves told Abigail about Nabal's rude response to David's men. He feared for Nabal's life because David's men had protected Nabal's interests and property while there.
- e** Just as the Lord defended David and his army, so also they defended others who were in need of protection. In this instance, David's men protected the young men while they herded sheep.
- f** Indicates that David's men made the protection of Nabal's young men a high priority while in Maon.
- g** "a wicked man" (NIV); "ill-tempered" (NLT)
- h** David recognized Abigail's insight regarding the situation between David and Nabal. She correctly declared that David would have a lasting dynasty because he obeyed the Lord. She also reminded him that he did not need to avenge his honor by his own hand, but that he should rely on God to protect and provide for him and for his men (vv. 20-31).
- i** David recognized Abigail had delivered him from God's wrath by directing him to avoid taking his own vengeance (see Deut. 32:35). Killing Nabal's men would've made him the object of God's wrath.
- j** David removed all fear from Abigail's mind regarding both her husband and her family by deciding not to take vengeance on Nabal.
- k** God judged Nabal for his wicked actions toward David. As a result, David praised God for intervening on his behalf and for preventing him from doing evil (v. 39).

## NOTES

### »» **DISASTER FORESEEN** (1 Sam. 25:14-17)

- Abigail, Nabal's wife, was informed of her husband's refusal to assist David and was challenged to consider a course of action to avert a greater disaster.

### »» **DAVID RELENTS** (1 Sam. 25:32-35)

- David offered thanks to God for His using Abigail to stop him from acting out of anger.
- David accepted Abigail's gift and offered her his blessings.

### »» **GOD INTERVENES** (1 Sam. 25:36-38)

- Abigail revealed to Nabal the actions she had taken to avert David's anger.
- Nabal was struck by a seizure and eventually died.
- Note that David rewarded Abigail by offering to care for her as his wife. Affirm marriage as being between one man and one woman. Characterize David's action as gracious (protecting Abigail).

### »» **SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

- People can take definite action to intervene in the face of conflict.
- Believers are to be thankful when God keeps them from acting out of selfish motives, including out of personal revenge.
- Believers can trust God to bring about His judgment against evil in His time.



## FOCUS ATTENTION

### When have you seen a conflict situation and tried to determine whether or not to get involved?

- While we cannot fix every situation, there are definitely times when we could and should intervene in the face of conflict.
- We can trust God to bring vengeance and justice for all people, knowing He is a fair judge.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 25:14-17

#### What do these verses tell us about Nabal?

- Nabal, a wealthy landowner, had treated David's men rudely, even though they had protected Nabal's servants as they tended the livestock.
- Nabal's servants describe him as a "worthless fool" (v. 17). Earlier passages describe Nabal as "harsh and evil" (v. 3).
- David asked Nabal to feed his men, as a favor for the protection they had provided. It would have been a customary courtesy for Nabal to agree to this, yet he refused. David began to plot revenge on Nabal and his household.

#### How did the servants challenge Abigail? What do we learn about Abigail in these verses?

- The servants reported Nabal's selfish behavior to Abigail, asking her to "consider carefully what you must do" (v. 17).
- That the servants brought the problem to Abigail suggests they believed she could help the situation. Perhaps they had gone to Abigail at other times regarding Nabal's bad demeanor.

### 1 SAMUEL 25:32-35

#### How did David respond to Abigail's decision to get involved in the conflict between David and Nabal?

- Abigail moved swiftly to act, gathering food and other gifts to bring to David in an attempt to appease his anger against Nabal. Then she delivered the gifts to David along with profuse apologies for Nabal's terrible behavior.
- David accepted both Abigail's gifts and her apologies. David thanked God for sending Abigail to him. He praised her discernment and blessed her for the swift action to intervene.

#### In what ways did Abigail have to step out of her "comfort zone" in her encounter with David? Where might God be calling you out of your "comfort zone"?

- Many people could have died as David pursued revenge. The Bible does not suggest that Abigail acted inappropriately in any way by involving herself in the conflict.
- David was already an important man, and Abigail understood that. In verse 28 she referred to the "lasting dynasty" the Lord was making with David.

- Imagine what courage it must have taken for Abigail, a woman in that culture, to go out and try to turn David, the man who would be king, away from his plans for revenge.
- Being willing to mediate a disagreement with a desire to help will likely require us to step out of our comfort zones too.

#### When should we get involved in a conflict? When must we leave vengeance to God?

- Sometimes we can speak directly to people in a conflict situation. Sometimes we may need to bring in people with more trained expertise. We can always pray.
- There are times when we are powerless to intervene. In those moments, we must choose the harder course of leaving justice in God's hands.
- We have probably all had some of those feelings when we or people we love have been wronged.

### 1 SAMUEL 25:36-38

#### How did God intervene in Nabal's and David's conflict?

- When Abigail told Nabal all that she had done to avert David's anger, Nabal's "heart failed him and he became like a stone" (v. 37, NIV).
- David left Nabal's fate in God's hand. Verse 38 tells us that God "struck Nabal dead." God set the record straight between David and Nabal.

#### How do we see Abigail taking the appropriate steps yet leaving the judgment in God's hands?

- When the "bad guys" in life "get what's coming to them," it is easy for us to feel smug or pleased.
- Nabal behaved badly. Abigail took steps to divert a tragedy from happening, but she left the judgment in God's hands. God honored her obedience while punishing Nabal.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

#### What lessons can be learned from Abigail, David, and Nabal that will be helpful as you face future challenging situations?

- There will be times when believers can and should take practical steps to get involved in arguments.
- Believers can trust that God is just and faithful. He will exact His vengeance and justice on all people.
- Believers are assured that God guards the steps of His people.
- **Personal Challenge:** The next time you see a conflict unfolding, carefully consider if this is a place where God would have you get involved. Then choose words and actions that would please Him.

# OBJECT LESSON

## A PHOTO OF A STORM

Display a photo of gathering storm clouds or another storm image. Call for participants to name some of the conditions or ingredients needed for a storm to occur (ex.: unstable air, temperature shifts). Explain: *In today's study, we'll look at a storm of conflict that was brewing and what one woman did to quiet that storm.*

Explain that Nabal was a wealthy landowner, who was "harsh and evil," but his wife Abigail was "intelligent and beautiful" (1 Sam. 25:3). David and his men had provided protection to Nabal's men who had been tending the livestock out in the wilderness area. It was shearing time, and the custom would have been for Nabal to feed David and his men as a "thank you" for their protection. Nabal rudely refused this show of kindness, so David plotted revenge.

Direct a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 25:14-17. Note that there were "storm clouds" gathering around Abigail between her husband Nabal and David. Ask: *What did Abigail do to help? How can believers decide when to take action in the face of conflict?*

Call for someone to read aloud 1 Samuel 25:32-35. Say: *The storm of David's anger was dissolved by Abigail's quick actions.*



Ask: *When have you seen someone's wise actions prevent conflict from escalating? Say: With Abigail's quick action, she was able to turn aside David's anger.*

Read aloud 1 Samuel 25:36-38. Ask: *How did the storm of Nabal's anger overtake him with deadly consequences? We can find comfort knowing that ultimately God is in control.*

## DIG DEEPER

### THE LORD'S VENGEANCE

Deuteronomy 32:35 says, "Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay. In time their foot will slip, for their day of disaster is near, and their doom is coming quickly." The theme of God's wrath is woven throughout Scripture. It comes to light in various ways, including prophecies, judgments, and acts of vengeance.

Biblically speaking, David's life was filled with references to the Lord's vengeance. David refused to "lift a hand against the LORD's anointed" (1 Sam. 26:9), engaged in many imprecatory prayers (Pss. 7; 35; 55; 58; 59; 69; 109; 139), and waited patiently for the Lord to avenge the children of Israel.

David's life serves as an example of how we should deal with our enemies, both in our motivations and in our actions. David's motivation for staying his hand was a healthy respect for God's sovereignty. David realized that God was really the one in control of every situation. Even while hiding in the wilderness, David understood that God had placed him there and sent Saul after him for a reason, and he trusted the Lord's purpose.

If David had struck down Saul—which he easily could have done on several occasions—he would have been violating God's authority. By taking Saul's life into his own hands, David would have incurred God's wrath on himself. In order to avoid such a penalty,

David's motivation caused him to act in a way that respected Saul's kingship. David did not intervene in Saul's downfall, but simply waited on the Lord to remove Saul's authority, rightly understanding that the throne of Israel was not his to take, but the Lord's to give.

Eventually, the Lord's vengeance found Saul. He was overwhelmed in battle and his three sons were struck down by the Philistines. Then he was wounded by archers, eventually falling on his own sword to avoid a more painful death (1 Sam. 31). Without ever attempting to avenge himself, David attained the throne of Israel through faithfulness.

As we experience difficult circumstances or persecution from enemies, we should follow David's example. We should never forget that God is in control of every situation, and He has sovereignly placed us right where we are for His purposes. Therefore, we must wait patiently on the Lord and allow Him to guide our every move. God is faithful and He will not abandon those who seek Him (Ps. 9:10).

## SESSION 12

# RESPECT

## 1 SAMUEL 26:7-12,21-25

<sup>7</sup> That night, David and **Abishai**<sup>a</sup> came to the troops, and Saul was lying there asleep in the inner circle of the camp with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. **Abner**<sup>b</sup> and the troops were lying around him. <sup>8</sup> Then Abishai said to David, “Today God has handed your enemy over to you. **Let me thrust the spear through him into the ground just once. I won’t have to strike him twice!**”<sup>d</sup> <sup>9</sup> But David said to Abishai, “Don’t destroy him, **for who can lift a hand against the LORD’s anointed and be blameless?**”<sup>e</sup> <sup>10</sup> David added, “As the LORD lives, the LORD will certainly strike him down: either his day will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish.”<sup>11</sup> However, because of the LORD, **I will never lift my hand against the LORD’s anointed.**<sup>f</sup> Instead, **take the spear and the water jug by his head, and let’s go.**”<sup>g</sup> <sup>12</sup> So David took the spear and the water jug by Saul’s head, and they went their way. No one saw them, no one knew, and no one woke up; they all remained asleep because **a deep sleep from the LORD came over them.**<sup>h</sup> ...

<sup>21</sup> Saul responded, “**I have sinned.**”<sup>i</sup> Come back, my son David, I will never harm you again because today you considered my life precious. I have been a fool! I’ve committed a grave error.” <sup>22</sup> David answered, “Here is the king’s spear; **have one of the young men come over and get it.**”<sup>j</sup> <sup>23</sup> May the LORD repay every man for his righteousness and his loyalty. I wasn’t willing to lift my hand against

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** After his victories against the Philistines, Abishai became one of the chiefs of David’s warriors (1 Chron. 11:10-20; 18:12).
- b** The son of Ner and a cousin of Saul, Abner served as captain of Saul’s army (1 Sam. 14:50,51; 17:55,57).
- c** Saul was asleep on the ground, making him an easy target. However, killing a defenseless man was extremely dishonorable.
- d** Abishai was making sport of Saul, excited at the prospect of killing him.
- e** David understood that Saul would reign until God removed his authority and thus refused to lift his own hand against Saul (Dan. 2:21).
- f** David had a covenant of trust with the Lord. By keeping it throughout his life, he demonstrated the highest level of respect for God’s authority.
- g** David wanted to make sure that Saul realized how close to death he had been.
- h** The Lord’s intervention was meant to demonstrate His favor toward David, as well as David’s loyalty both to God and to Saul’s kingdom.
- i** Saul admitted his folly toward David. A common theme for Saul, he was again remorseful regarding his decisions yet also proved he did not keep his promises (1 Sam. 15:24,30; 24:16-17).
- j** David did not trust Saul, so he asked for someone who did not present a threat to retrieve Saul’s spear.

(Continued on the next page)

the LORD's anointed, even though the LORD handed you over to me today.<sup>24</sup> Just as I considered your life valuable today, so **may the LORD consider my life valuable<sup>k</sup>** and rescue me from all trouble.”<sup>25</sup> Saul said to him, **“You are blessed, my son David. You will certainly do great things and will also prevail.”**<sup>1</sup> Then David went on his way, and Saul returned home.

**k** David said this in contrast to Saul's statement in 1 Samuel 26:21, specifically asking the Lord to consider his life valuable since it is the Lord who numbers the days of every man's life.

**1** Saul finally admitted that God had planned great things for David. These were the last words Saul and David spoke to each other.

## “” TALKING POINTS

### »» OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

(1 Sam. 26:7-8)

- David again had an opportunity to kill Saul.
- Abishai encouraged David to take advantage of the opportunity.

### »» GODLY RESPECT (1 Sam. 26:9-12)

- David called for no harm to be done to Saul out of respect for God's selection of Saul as king.
- Instead, David removed Saul's sword and water jug, and slipped away undetected.

### »» REMORSE (1 Sam. 26:21)

- After discovering David had the opportunity to kill him but chose not to do so, Saul expressed remorse over the way he had treated David.
- Saul declared that he would no longer seek to harm David.

### »» TRUST IN GOD (1 Sam. 26:22-25)

- David gave Saul back his spear and called for God to be their Judge.
- Saul blessed David, and the two men went separate ways.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Opportunities must be weighed in light of God's principles and will.
- God expects His followers to respect the lives of others, even those who oppose them.
- God's timing can be trusted in all matters of life.

## NOTES



## FOCUS ATTENTION

### When have you had to plan a big event at work or at home? What was the hardest part?

- If you've ever been the one responsible for planning an event, you know that sometimes even the best laid plans can go awry.
- God's plans are best, and they are always superior to our plans. The question we must ask ourselves is, *Are we willing to trust God's plan?*

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 26:7-8

#### What opportunity did David face in these verses? How did David's companion, Abishai, urge David to respond?

- David found Saul's camp with Saul and his soldiers asleep on the ground. Saul's spear was stuck in the ground near his head.
- Abishai, David's companion, offered to kill Saul, telling David that God had provided this opportunity.

#### Every day we encounter opportunities and decisions. What influences you the most in these opportunities throughout the day?

- People make decisions in a variety of ways—what benefits me, what benefits everyone, what seems right, what feels right, or what is easiest.
- For believers facing a decision, the question should always be, *What would God have me do here?*

### 1 SAMUEL 26:9-12

#### How did David respond to the opportunity to harm Saul?

- King Saul was still the "LORD's anointed," and David respected this (v. 9). He would leave Saul's life in God's hand.
- Saul had tried to harm David, and he had disobeyed God in many ways. Yet David's respect for God outweighed any negative feelings he may have had toward Saul.
- David did take Saul's spear and water jug as he headed back toward his own camp.

#### What lessons can we learn from David in regard to the way we treat our political leaders today?

- While we don't agree with what some elected officials do or say, believers should respect the office they hold.
- Believers are instructed to submit to authorities and to pray for them (see Rom. 13:1-5; 1 Tim. 2:1-4).

### 1 SAMUEL 26:21

#### How did Saul react to the news that David had chosen not to harm him?

- When David was a safe distance from Saul's camp, he called out, letting them know he had been there.

- Saul called himself "a fool" and apologized for his sinful behavior toward David.
- Saul promised he would never try to harm David again.
- Saul sounded remorseful and genuine, but Saul's past actions might cause one to wonder about his sincerity.

#### When have you seen a situation change for the better because someone chose to do good instead of harm?

- Revenge might be our first inclination when we've been wronged, but God's Word tells us to turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:39).
- Sometimes we can change the course of a bad situation when we take the high road of turning the other cheek.

#### Saul said David "considered my life precious" (v. 21). What are ways we can consider each other's lives precious today?

- We must always remember that we all are created in the image of God and are precious to Him.
- We are being more Christlike when we treat each other as precious in all our dealings with each other.
- Imagine what our homes, churches, and communities would look like if we all treated one another as precious.

### 1 SAMUEL 26:22-25

#### David chose to turn away from harming Saul. In what ways did David show respect for Saul, even though Saul had been pursuing David to harm him?

- David returned Saul's spear. He called for God to repay every man for "his righteousness and his loyalty" (v. 23).
- David did not call for Saul to consider his "life valuable," but he did ask God to do so (v. 24).
- David and Saul went their separate ways. These are the last words they said to each other.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

#### What are the situations today where you need to step out of the way and allow God to work His will?

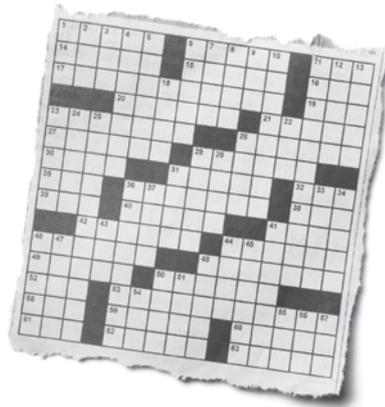
- God's plans are always superior to our plans. We need to be willing to trust His ways and His timing.
- Trusting God means being willing to let go of the control so that He can work His plans.
- This is not necessarily a one-time decision. Trusting God may mean deciding fresh each morning that we're going to trust Him in all the details for the day ahead.
- **Personal Challenge:** Be willing to let God work in His way and in His timing with some challenge or problem you are facing today. Pray for God's leading and guiding in each step you take.

## A CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Display a newspaper crossword puzzle but cut away the word clues, showing only the crossword grid. Ask participants if they could figure out the puzzle without the word clues. Explain: *Trying to do life on our own without God's help is kind of like trying to solve that crossword puzzle without the grid. There is help available if we are willing to place our lives in God's hands.*

Call for volunteers to read aloud 1 Samuel 26:7-8,9-12. Explain: *David and his companion Abishai had come upon Saul and his soldiers, all in a deep sleep. Abishai wanted to "take matters into his own hands" and kill Saul. Note that David refused to allow Saul to be killed. Ask: "When have you had to trust God's timing in a hard situation? Say: "Sometimes God calls on us to trust Him and His ways, even when there are no answers in sight.*

Direct a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 26:21. Notice that Saul realized David could have killed him. Say: *He showed remorse for the way he had treated David and promised that he would no longer try to hurt David. Ask: "How hard or easy is it to leave those who oppose us in God's hands? What does this have to do with trusting God?"*



Read aloud 1 Samuel 26:22-25. Point out that David returned Saul's spear, Saul blessed David, and the two men parted ways. Say: *Once we know the "rest of the story," we see the wisdom of David's actions. Ask: "How can we know what to do when we face hard decisions in life? When have you seen the wisdom of leaving things in God's hands? Affirm that God guards and orders the steps of believers who are willing to trust Him.*

## DIG DEEPER

### I HAVE SINNED

The word *sin* means, "to miss the mark." Like an arrow misses or falls short of the bullseye, so too does the sinner miss the standard of holiness. The Bible clearly states that every man is a sinner: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). "There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God" (Rom. 3:10-11).

Furthermore, the Bible clearly indicates that sin is present in every individual from the moment of conception: "Indeed, I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5). There is no partiality in sinfulness; every man is equally guilty regardless of the number or severity of his offenses: "For whoever keeps the entire law, yet fails in one point, is guilty of breaking it all" (Jas. 2:10).

In summary, every man is sinful from conception, guilty of breaking the entire law of God; every child who lives long enough to make conscious decisions willfully chooses to sin. We are bound by sin, weighed down by sin, and completely incapable of escaping it because our will is bent to sinning. The bottom line is we sin because we are sinners.

How then can we be saved? The only way is to believe in Jesus, the only begotten Son of God. Jesus was conceived in purity, free from sin, and innocent according to the standard of God's law. He lived a perfect life in obedience to every command of God and offered Himself as a sacrifice to pay for our sins.

In 1 Samuel 26:21, Saul declared, "I have sinned ... I have been a fool! I've committed a grave error." Saul recognized what God had done for David, and he realized that he was opposing the will of God.

Our first step is to confess our sinfulness. We must admit we have opposed God and deserve every judgment He may render. We then declare our trust and reliance on Christ's sacrifice to remove our sin, knowing He will forgive and cleanse us (1 John 1:8-9).

## SESSION 13

# VICTORY

## 1 SAMUEL 30:6-8,18-25

<sup>6</sup> David was in a difficult position because **the troops talked about stoning him,<sup>a</sup> for they were all very bitter over the loss of their sons and daughters.<sup>b</sup> But David found strength in the LORD his God.<sup>c</sup>** <sup>7</sup> David said to **Abiathar the priest, son of Ahimelech,<sup>d</sup>** “Bring me the ephod.”

So Abiathar brought it to him, <sup>8</sup> and David asked the LORD: **“Should I pursue these raiders? Will I overtake them?”<sup>e</sup>**

The LORD replied to him, “Pursue them, for you will certainly overtake them and rescue the people.” ...

<sup>18</sup> David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken; he also rescued his two wives. <sup>19</sup> Nothing of theirs was missing from the youngest to the oldest, including the sons and daughters, of all the plunder the Amalekites had taken.

**David got everything back.<sup>f</sup>** <sup>20</sup> He took all the sheep and cattle, which were driven ahead of the other livestock, and the people shouted, “This is David’s plunder!” <sup>21</sup> When David came to **the 200 men<sup>g</sup>** who had been too exhausted to go with him and had been left at the Wadi Besor, they came out to meet him and to meet the troops with him. When David approached the men, he greeted them, <sup>22</sup> but **all the corrupt and worthless men<sup>h</sup>** among those who had gone with David argued, “Because they didn’t go with us, we will not give any of the plunder we recovered to them except for each man’s wife and children. They may take them and go.”

<sup>23</sup> But David said, **“My brothers,<sup>i</sup>** you must not do this with

## EXPLORING KEY WORDS

**a** David had left Ziklag without defense. Amalekite raiding parties had ransacked it while Saul and the Israelites were engaging the Philistines in battle (1 Sam. 29).

**b** When the Amalekites attacked Ziklag, they took many prisoners, including the wives, sons, and daughters of the soldiers (1 Sam. 30:3).

**c** David trusted that God would preserve his life through this trial (Ps. 18:2).

**d** Abiathar was the eleventh high priest in the succession of Aaron (1 Sam. 22:20-22; 23:6,9).

**e** This demonstrated David’s firm commitment to the will of God. David had no intention of chasing the Amalekites without the Lord’s permission.

**f** David’s army was able to recover everything the Amalekites had stolen, including their families.

**g** A third of David’s warriors had been too exhausted to continue ahead to the rescue of their families because: (1) the journey from Aphek to Ziklag took three days (1 Sam. 29:11–30:1); (2) the emotional distress of seeing their town destroyed and their families gone; and (3) the 15-mile trek from Ziklag to the Wadi Besor (1 Sam. 30:9-10,21).

**h** This refers to the 200 men who didn’t want to share the spoils of war with those who didn’t continue beyond the Wadi Besor.

**i** David was attempting to identify with his disgruntled men so that he could reason with them concerning their dishonorable greed.

*(Continued on the next page)*

**what the LORD has given us.**<sup>j</sup> He protected us and handed over to us the raiders who came against us.

**<sup>24</sup> Who can agree to your proposal?**<sup>k</sup> The share of the one who goes into battle is to be the same as the share of the one who remains with the supplies. **They will share equally.**<sup>l</sup> <sup>25</sup> And it has been so from that day forward. David established this policy as a law and an ordinance for Israel and it continues to this very day.

**j** David demonstrated his belief that it was God who had brought them protection and victory.

**k** David emphasized that they had no right to dictate how the spoils of battle would be shared because the battle and the spoils belonged to the Lord, not to the men.

**l** David equally shared everything they took from the Amalekites—even with the 200 who had stayed behind.

## TALKING POINTS

### »» DECISION TIME (1 Sam. 30:6-8)

- David sought God's direction after Ziklag had been raided and burned by the Amalekites.
- God directed him to pursue the raiders and assured him victory.

### »» RECOVERED (1 Sam. 30:18-20)

- David recovered everything taken by the Amalekites, including his family.

### »» VICTORY FOR ALL (1 Sam. 30:21-25)

- Some soldiers questioned returning anything beyond their families to some soldiers who were unable to pursue the Amalekites.
- David instituted a law in response and declared that every member of his army would receive an equal portion of what was recovered.
- David viewed this decree as a recognition of God's hand in the battle.

### »» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- God can be trusted to give direction in our lives.
- We can be thankful when God chooses to provide for our families.
- Every believer plays an important role in God's work and should be treated with equal dignity.

## NOTES



## FOCUS ATTENTION

**When you're facing a tough problem, who is the first person you call?**

- Many of us have a go-to person—a family member or a close friend—whom we call when facing a challenge.
- When David suffered a stunning defeat that involved the loss of his family too, he turned to God first. As believers, sometimes we're guilty of turning to God as a last resort, not a first choice. We need to be willing to let go and trust God more.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1 SAMUEL 30:6-8

**What troubles was David facing? What direction did God give?**

- David and his troops returned from battle to the terrible discovery that the Amalekites had raided the town, burned it, and kidnapped their families, including David's family.
- David's own men blamed him for this stunning attack and talked of stoning him.
- David turned to God, seeking guidance for what to do next. God gave David the clear instruction to pursue the Amalekites, because they would have victory and be able to rescue their families.

**Notice verse 6: "David found strength in the LORD his God." In what ways do you find your strength in God? How does seeking strength elsewhere disappoint us?**

- In this moment of overwhelming trouble and heartache, David showed us that God can be counted on to be faithful. We can have this same sure confidence in God.
- Finding strength in God was not a 911 call for David. Turning to God for strength and guidance was a regular part of his life.
- We may find a temporary surge of strength in other people or circumstances, but only in seeking God can we know the sure and certain strength drawn from relationship with Him.

### 1 SAMUEL 30:18-20

**How successful was David in pursuing the Amalekites?**

- Following God's direction, David and his soldiers pursued the Amalekites and found them drinking and celebrating their battle successes.
- David's men defeated the Amalekites in a surprise attack.
- Again, God showed Himself faithful. David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken from them.

**Why do we find it easy to follow God's direction in some life circumstances and more difficult in others? What's the root issue?**

- We are all different, but many of us might have certain areas of life where we struggle in letting God have control.

- Giving God control of every area of our lives is not a one-time easy decision. It is a daily surrender of obedience to His will for us.

### 1 SAMUEL 30:21-25

**What was the problem David faced among his soldiers? What was David's solution?**

- Some 400 of David's men joined him in attacking and defeating the Amalekites, while 200 men stayed behind, too exhausted to fight.
- When David returned with all of the rescued family members and livestock, some of the 400—"corrupt and worthless men"—argued that the 200 men who did not fight should not share in the plunder.
- David made a law that every man—those who fought and those who rested and remained with the supplies—would share equally in the spoils of war. By doing this, David recognized God's hand in the battle.

**When successful, why do we struggle with wanting to claim all the glory for ourselves? How did keeping the focus on God's role in the victory help David see the way to a clear solution?**

- When successes come our way, we can be tempted to enjoy the glory ourselves, neglecting to give God the credit.
- Every believer is important in God's work and should be treated with equal dignity.
- David gave God the credit for the victory and didn't have to worry about who played a small or big role in the success.

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

**How can we encourage each other as we serve God through our church and in our community?**

- Challenge each other to look to God for direction.
- Pray for each other's families.
- Honor all workers and their role in God's kingdom. All work done for God is important, and all workers should be treated with dignity.
- **Personal Challenge:** Look for believers who struggle to find their value or worth in God's kingdom work. Encourage that person, helping them see that we can trust God's direction and plan in each of our lives. Remind them that there are no little people or little jobs in God's kingdom.

# OBJECT LESSON

## SEVERAL PIECES OF CANDY

Display pieces of candy on the table. Comment to participants that many of us received an allowance as children. Then give out “candy allowances” to people in the group, but nobody gets the same amount. Ask: *How do you feel about the uneven distribution? Does it make you feel more important or less important, based on the amount of candy you received?*

Direct a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 30:6-8. Ask: *Following this shocking defeat in battle, where did David seek direction? What instruction did God give?*

Call for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 30:18-20. Say: *God’s guidance had been sure and true. David’s men recovered every family member and all the livestock the Amalekites had taken.* Ask: *When have you trusted God in a hard situation and seen His hand at work?*

Remind the group of the uneven distribution of candy at the beginning of the session. Then read 1 Samuel 30:21-22. Point out that the soldiers who had fought did not want to share the plunder with those who had rested. Ask: *What would be “fair” in this situation? Who should receive the plunder?*



Read verses 23-25. Stress that David showed through his words and actions that all people are important. He emphasized that it was God’s victory, not the victory of a few men. Ask: *How can we apply this in our church? In our family?* Affirm that every believer plays an important part in doing God’s work.

## DIG DEEPER

### UNITY

In 1 Samuel 30:21-25, David encountered a situation involving two distinct groups of his soldiers. There was a group of 400 soldiers who went with David all the way to the Amalekite camp and fought to rescue their families and possessions from captivity. There were also 200 men who remained at the Wadi Besor, too tired to continue with the others in pursuit of the Amalekites.

When the battle was over and the spoils won, some of the soldiers who had fought did not want to share any of the spoils with the soldiers who had remained behind. The prevailing sentiment was that the men who did not fight were not deserving of any of the plunder. David quickly insisted that such an action was dishonorable because the victory and the spoils had been given to them by God.

David, thinking that unity among his soldiers was more important than particular rewards, said “the share of the one who goes into battle is to be the same as the share of the one who remains with the supplies. They will share equally” (1 Sam. 30:24). By instituting this law, David mirrored the unity that is expected in the body of Christ.

In Romans 12:3-9, Paul described how God, in His wisdom, gives to every believer “a measure of faith to each one” (v. 3). However, believers differ in their function according to the spiritual gifts they have received. Some are gifted to serve, some to prophesy, some to teach, some to be merciful, and so forth. Yet all believers have an equal portion in the body of Christ.

David demonstrated this unity by recognizing the different functions of the soldiers: some fought in battle, and some remained with the supplies. By acknowledging that all of the soldiers were members of the army, each should receive an equal portion of the spoils of war.

While we are all different in our functions, talents, and spiritual gifts, God shows no partiality to us. God gives salvation and an inheritance “to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).



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# REAL-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP



by Michael Kelley

Sure, it's sobering—the realization that we don't know it all and could use some help figuring out life. Whenever the humble pie is digested, it's a great time to engage in a meaningful relationship with someone who has been on the road a bit longer. Someone who has soldiered economic battles and crested the hill. Someone who has gagged through their fair share of diaper changes and somehow managed, against all odds, to make it through. Someone who just might know a thing or two about the practical aspects of life—and about walking with Jesus on Mondays as well as Sundays.

Discipleship isn't some mystical process performed in classrooms or monasteries. It's simply helping one another follow Jesus. And because we don't just follow Jesus at church, but in everyday life, making disciples is meant to be carried out in all arenas of life. Real simple, real-life discipleship happens in the grocery store as well as the sanctuary, in the backyard as well as the Sunday morning classroom.

## **AUTHENTICITY, NOT PERFECTION**

Understanding the real-life context of discipleship demystifies the process and propels everyday folks like us into our God-given mission. That's why the right word for discipleship isn't perfection; it's authenticity. Here's the difference.

**1. Authenticity offers hope.** Following Jesus isn't about arriving at a destination; it's a process of following ever closer this side of heaven. In fact, when we ask those who have walked with the Lord for a long time, we're likely not to hear an "arrived" mentality, but rather a humble expression of continued realization of their sin. That's the rubber-meets-the-road

dynamic of spiritual growth: As we progress toward maturity, we actually see how much farther we have to go. The hope for a young person in this kind of mentoring relationship isn't so much in arriving at perfection, but in seeing older adults still walking, still pursuing, still going forward, still trusting in the grace of God even when tough times loom large.

**2. Authenticity ensures that spiritual growth is nurtured in a community of faith.** We're meant to grow together. That's a little off-putting sometimes, since most of us grew up in a culture where the value of personal achievement was drilled into our skulls from the earliest days of preschool. But make no mistake—God intends for us to grow in Christ together.

In fact, God exists in a community of three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And Jesus prayed that as His followers, we might be brought to complete unity. God indeed calls us to Himself as individuals, but when we're born again, we're born into a family where members are to help each other follow Jesus. And when we're open and honest with each other, we nurture the family of God.

**3. Authenticity ensures that the gospel is kept central.** Let's say I'm mentoring a young man, but I never confess my own sin, show weakness, or acknowledge shortcomings. That person is likely to leave a conversation with me thinking, I wish I could be like Michael. But that's counter to the goal of discipleship. The illusion of perfection has become a stumbling block for the very person I'm trying to help because I've taken the focus off Jesus and His work on the cross and put it squarely on myself. Ouch.

Through authenticity, though, you and I can point others back to the gospel time and time again. We can reveal when we are weak, Jesus is strong. When we fall short, He makes up for what we lack. When we stumble, Jesus is sure-footed. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Authenticity beats the drum of the gospel over and over again; and makes a powerful impact on others.

**4. Authenticity paves discipleship as a two-way street.** Authentic spiritual mentors position themselves to receive from the relationship as well as give. Imagine how wonderful to see younger people discover spiritual truths we've embraced for years. Imagine the joy of helping others grow in Christ.

And imagine how our own relationship with Jesus might be pushed to new heights as others share with us what they're learning in the Word because of our guidance. But only those of us committed to authenticity are positioned to receive this kind of goodness. Sadly, for someone committed to perfection, a younger believer's spiritual advancement might be perceived as a threat.

## AUTHENTIC FREEDOM

For those of us ready to embrace the commission of Jesus to make disciples right where we are, it's extremely freeing to realize authenticity is actually immensely more valuable than perfection. Discipleship is the imperative for each and every one of us. And the imperative to lay bare imperfection and seize the opportunity to engage in authenticity of faith is powerful stuff. Let's engage in authentic discipleship. After all, per Jesus, getting real is a big deal.

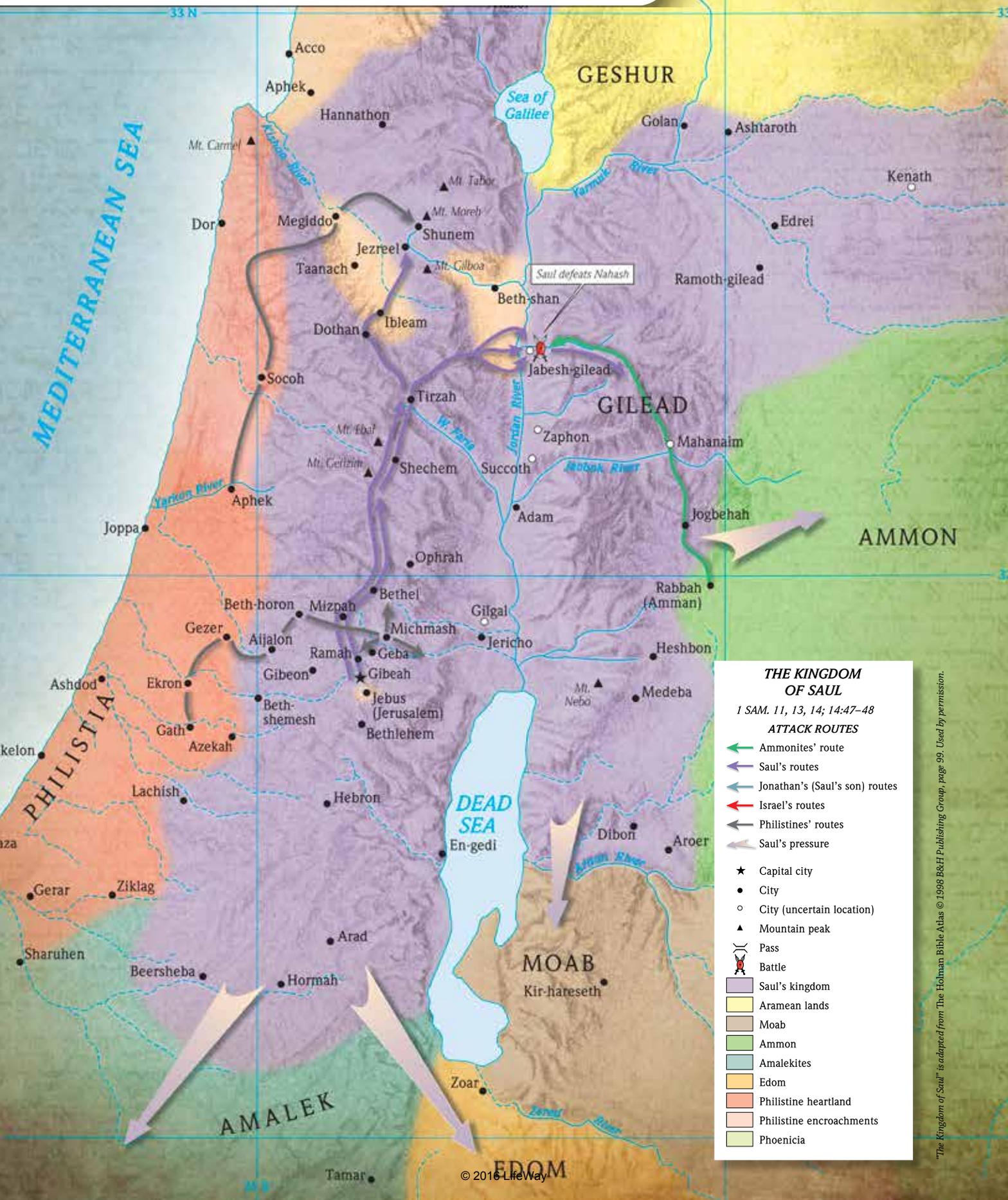
*As a communicator, Michael Kelley speaks across the country at churches, conferences, and retreats. He is the author of several books, including *Wednesdays Were Pretty Normal: A Boy, Cancer, and God (B&H)* and *Faith Limps: Trusting a Good God in a Broken World (LifeWay)*.*

# COMING NEXT QUARTER

## 1 & 2 PETER; JUDE

- Session 1**    **A Living Hope** > *1 Peter 1:3-9*
- Session 2**    **Be Holy** > *1 Peter 1:13-25*
- Session 3**    **Building Our Faith** > *1 Peter 2:1-10*
- Session 4**    **Living as Strangers** > *1 Peter 2:11-20*
- Session 5**    **Living in Relationship** > *1 Peter 3:1-12*
- Session 6**    **Always Ready** > *1 Peter 3:13-22*
- Session 7**    **Equipped to Live** > *1 Peter 4:1-11*
- Session 8**    **When Ridiculed** > *1 Peter 4:12-19*
- Session 9**    **Alert Living** > *1 Peter 5:1-11*
- Session 10**    **Being Useful** > *2 Peter 1:3-11*
- Session 11**    **With Trust** > *2 Peter 1:12-21*
- Session 12**    **On Guard** > *2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude 16-25*
- Session 13**    **With Anticipation** > *2 Peter 3:3-13,17-18*

# The Kingdom of Saul



**THE KINGDOM OF SAUL**

1 SAM. 11, 13, 14; 14:47-48

**ATTACK ROUTES**

- Ammonites' route
- Saul's routes
- Jonathan's (Saul's son) routes
- Israel's routes
- Philistines' routes
- Saul's pressure

- ★ Capital city
- City
- City (uncertain location)
- ▲ Mountain peak

- Pass
- Battle

- Saul's kingdom
- Aramean lands
- Moab
- Ammon
- Amalekites
- Edom
- Philistine heartland
- Philistine encroachments
- Phoenicia

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## Coming Up Next

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***God the Pursuer*** (Prophets; 1–2 Chronicles)

BY Michael Kelley

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