

## Week #20 – Exploring God's Word

### 1 SAMUEL 8 THROUGH 1 SAMUEL 19

#### 1 SAMUEL 8

Samuel's sons were corrupt and Samuel was getting old, so the people asked for a king. God warned them saying a king would take a lot from them, but they still demanded. God said, "Give them a king." **It is possible to be faithful in ministry and yet close your life in disappointment. That is what happened to Samuel. He was disappointed in his sons. They were not able to carry on their father's ministry because they did not follow their father's godly example. He was disappointed in the nation, for they wanted a king. They used Samuel's sons as their excuse, but the real reason was their lack of faith in God. He was disappointed in King Saul who rebelled against God and forfeited the crown. Much that Samuel worked for and prayed for seems to have turned out differently from what he expected, and yet he remained faithful to the Lord to the end. Leaders who are faithful to God may not always appear successful to men.**

#### 1 SAMUEL 9

Saul, a Benjamite, went looking for his father's lost donkeys. Unsuccessful, they decided to ask the local seer, Samuel. God had told Samuel that on that day he would send the next king of Israel. Samuel met Saul and prepared to anoint him. **How strange that Saul did not know about Samuel, and how disappointing that the only reason they visited Samuel was to find their lost animals! People often "use" religion to solve their problems and not to strengthen their character or overcome their sins. Nevertheless, God used all of this to bring Saul to Samuel. Faithfulness in a small task led Saul to a new friend, a new calling and a new opportunity to serve God.**

#### 1 SAMUEL 10

Samuel anointed Saul as king, then told him where to find the donkeys. God changed Saul's heart. Saul joined a procession of prophets and began prophesying, shocking those who knew him. Samuel announced to the people that Saul was their new king. They proclaimed, "Long live the king!" **Saul could not understand how a man like him could lead the nation of Israel, so God gave him a series of "signs" to assure him for his new responsibilities. A leader must trust God to solve problems (vv. 1–2), to provide needs (vv. 3–4), and to give the power needed for service (vv. 5–7). He must know how to hear God's Word and wait obediently on the Lord (v. 8). Saul began his ministry in the strength of these assurances, but as time went on, he trusted more and more in himself and rebelled against God's Word.**

#### 1 SAMUEL 11

King Nahash the Ammonite led his army to Jabesh Gilead and threatened to kill them. When they asked for a treaty, he offered to gouge out their right eyes. Saul rescued the city of Jabesh and the nation crowned him as king. **God empowered Saul to fight the battle and win (v. 6). He had stature as well as authority; he had proved himself a leader. But it can be as dangerous after the victory as it is during the battle, for Saul was tempted to get rid of his critics (vv. 12–13). He gave God the glory and did not use his authority and success as weapons to attack his own people. Samuel had the right idea: it was time to renew their covenant with the Lord; and again, the nation met at historic Gilgal. Do the crises God permits in your life strengthen your faith? Do you use the victories He gives to glorify Him and help others?**

## 1 SAMUEL 12

Samuel addressed the people, confirming with them that he was an honest man who never stole from them. They agreed. He warned them about following idols and chastised them about asking for a king. Samuel prayed for rain and it came, causing the people to realize their sin. **(19–25). The people had forsaken God, but He would not forsake them, for He is true to His Word. They had the assurance of God's faithfulness as well as the prayers and ministry of Samuel. Had the king maintained his friendship with Samuel and obeyed the Word, he would have led the nation to victory.**

## 1 SAMUEL 13

Before a scary stand-off with the Philistines in which the Israelites were outnumbered, the army waited for Samuel's arrival. Impatient, Saul made the burnt offering himself just as Samuel arrived. Samuel announced that another king would rule instead, a man after God's heart. Saul's army did not have weapons as they prepared to fight the Philistines. **Saul failed to tell the truth (vv. 10–15). When David sinned, he came with confessions; when Saul sinned, he had only excuses. He lied to his best friend, and it cost him his crown. And Saul would do it again (1 Sam. 15:15). From that point, his course was downhill. Evangelist Billy Sunday defined an excuse as "the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie." Benjamin Franklin said, "I never knew a man who was good at making excuses who was good at anything else." Adam made the first excuse for sin (Gen. 3:12), and many have followed his bad example. Excuses only make matters worse.**

## 1 SAMUEL 14

Jonathan performed a solo sneak attack on the Philistines, causing chaos in their camp. When Saul's army also attacked, the Philistines were killing each other and in confusion. Saul told his army not to eat food before their enemies have fallen. Not knowing about the curse, Jonathan ate honey. When told, Jonathan thought the command was foolish. When Saul asked God for permission to attack the Philistines, he got no answer and decided to cast lots to figure out the problem. It landed on Jonathan, who confessed to eating the honey. Saul wanted to kill him, but the soldiers protested. Saul had military success. His family lineage is outlined. **Jonathan was the true leader in Israel, not Saul. The contrast between the two is striking. Saul was sitting while Jonathan was attacking the enemy. Saul trusted his growing army, but Jonathan trusted God and did not depend on numbers (v. 6). Saul watched things happen, but Jonathan made things happen. Saul tried to impress people with an oath, but Jonathan did what was necessary to fight the battle. Saul weakened the army; Jonathan strengthened the army and challenged it to new victories. Saul was great on words but weak on deeds.**

## 1 SAMUEL 15

Samuel told Saul to defeat the Amalekites and to destroy everything and everyone in the nation. Saul defeated the Amalekites, but did not kill the best livestock and King Agag, who he brought back to the camp. Samuel arrived and heard the bleating of sheep. Samuel told Saul that God rejected him as king and was sorry he ever made him king. Samuel killed King Agag.

**God's orders were clear, but Saul's motives were mixed (James 1:8). Look at the losses Saul incurred because he disobeyed God's word. He lost his character, for he lied to Samuel and tried to blame the people. Saul was very good at excuses. He lost his friend Samuel (v. 35) who had anointed him, taught him, and prayed for him. He lost his crown. God took the kingdom from Saul and gave it to David. Saul had many advantages as he began his reign, but he failed God and the people because he did not cultivate his spiritual life.**

## 1 SAMUEL 16

Tired of Saul, God told Samuel to go to Bethlehem to see the man God had chosen to be king. God directed him to Jesse and his sons, telling Samuel to not judge by outward appearances. God judges a person's thoughts and intentions. After seeing all the sons, Samuel didn't feel God's approval until Jesse called for his youngest son David who was tending sheep. Samuel anointed him. The Spirit of God left Saul and he was tormented by spirits. Samuel's servants suggested music to calm him. David, who played harp, was hired and Saul was pleased and made him an armor-bearer too. **Samuel anointed David to be king and then departed from Bethlehem, for his work there was done. How would a shepherd boy get from the fields to the throne? That was not Samuel's responsibility; God would see to it. God used David's musical skill to bring him into the king's presence. Empowered by the Spirit (v. 13), David had nothing to fear.**

## 1 SAMUEL 17

The Israelite and Philistine army faced off at the Valley of Elah. Goliath, a giant, challenged anyone from the Israelite army to fight him. The winner won the entire battle. No one took up the offer. David, delivering food and messages to his brothers at the front lines, heard of the insults coming from Goliath and offered to fight him. Saul tried to dress him in armor but David said he had killed lions and bears as a shepherd. Goliath mocked David, until David charged him with a sling and planted a stone in his forehead. David cut off Goliath's head and the Israelites routed the Philistines. **A seemingly trivial errand led to a challenging situation that brought glory to God and recognition to David. Be prepared; you never know when your opportunity will come. Saul was losing strength, but David was growing in power; and Saul's diminishment would continue until Saul's tragic death. Saul stood head and shoulders above everybody else, but he was not big enough to meet Goliath.**

## 1 SAMUEL 18

David and Jonathan bonded. The people credited David with ten times more deaths than Saul, making Saul jealous. Saul raved like a madman, throwing his spear at David to kill him. Saul gave his daughter Merab to David, as his other daughter Michal fell in love with him. David refused marriage to a king's daughter, wondering how his humble family could afford the bride price. Saul asked for one hundred Philistine foreskins. David brought two hundred. Saul gave David Michal. **As you read the history of Saul, you often find him with a spear in his hand. It was his symbol of authority and power, and he did not want anybody to forget that he was in charge. David had a harp in his hand—or a shepherd's crook or a sling or a sword. Whatever task God had for him to do, David was available to do it, and God received the glory. When you are jealous over your authority and position, as Saul was, you become envious of others and sensitive to what people are saying about you. Saul became almost paranoid about David. First he was envious of David, then suspicious and afraid, then angry, and finally so hateful that he wanted to kill him. In that difficult situation, David acted with wisdom from God and trusted God to help him. David never considered Saul his enemy, which kept David in the place of God's blessing. David remained a humble servant in spite of his great victories, for he knew that God's anointing was upon him. God used those difficult experiences of conflict to help make David a great man of faith.**

## 1 SAMUEL 19

Jonathan warned David about his father. Saul promised not to kill him, but when David arrived to play the harp, an evil spirit caused Saul to hurl a spear at him. Saul even sent troops to David's house. Michal warned David and helped him escape, then set up a fake idol with goat hair to pretend David was asleep in bed. The troops arrived and discovered he was gone. When word got out that David was in Naoith, Saul sent troops there, but all three battalions began prophesying with prophets. When Saul himself went to Naoith, he too prophesied, laying naked on the ground all night.

**David was in constant danger, but God protected him, sometimes providentially (v. 10) and sometimes through the ministry of others. When the battles were all ended, David wrote, “He delivered me because He delighted in me” (Ps. 18:19). David’s integrity before God was his strongest weapon during those years of persecution from Saul. You cannot control what people do to you, but you can control what you do with God. Jonathan was David’s dearest friend, and he kept David informed of Saul’s plans. Faith in God does not exclude a commonsense approach to life. Michal, Saul’s daughter, risked her life to protect her husband, and until the day of his death, Samuel stood by David.**

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