

Digging Deeper Samuel Week 4

This week's study finds us in a new season for the Israelites. They have been ruled by judges and now we will see them turn from this system to asking for a king. It starts off when we see the unfaithfulness of Samuel's sons.

1 Samuel 8:1-3 When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. ² The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. ³ Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

Like his predecessor, Eli and his sons, Samuel's sons did not follow in their father's footsteps. It must have been heartbreaking for Samuel to know that his sons were not following the Lord the way he had all of his life. It is true for anyone who follows Jesus and yet their children or grandchildren don't. Can you relate to that? Do you have children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews who are not following the Lord? Write a prayer asking the Lord to soften their heart and put others in their path who can draw them into a relationship with Jesus.

1 Samuel 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah ⁵ and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations."

The people knew Samuel was getting older and they didn't want to be left with his sons judging them because they were wicked. Notice that the people do not ask for another judge but asked for a king, not someone to judge them but someone to lead and rule over them. The problem with this is that they already had a king – they had the King of all kings – they had the Lord of hosts – they had God Almighty.

God had set the Hebrew people apart to be His people and He would be their God. They were to be different from the people around them who worshipped pagan Gods. They were to draw others to know God. They were to influence the world around them, not be influenced by the world. The same is true for us today. Look at what Jesus says:

John 17:16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world

John 17:18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

We are IN the world, in the physical world because it is where we live, but we are not supposed to be OF the world. We, like the Israelites, are called to be holy to the Lord, to be set apart for His purposes. We are to be His ambassadors in this broken world.

1 Corinthians 5:20 *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ...*

Are you an influencer for Jesus or do you find yourself being more influenced BY the world? How are you being an influencer or ambassador for the Lord?

1 Samuel 8:6a *But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us."*

Samuel had worked his whole life serving the Lord and trying to get the people of God to do the same and now as he is getting up there in age he realizes that they just don't get it. Samuel was very disappointed by this request – and look at how he handled disappointment:

1 Samuel 8:6b *And Samuel prayed to the Lord.*

Samuel took his disappointment straight to the Lord. He didn't argue or fight or even vent to a friend. He prayed to the Lord. We have all suffered disappointments in life from time to time. What disappointments have you had and how did you handle them?

The Israelites are asking for a king in the midst of their season of rest, a time when things were going well for them as a nation for the most part. Eugene Peterson in his commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel says this, "Here is a curious thing: We are more apt to leave God's ways during times of well-being than in time of need. Prosperity seems to be a more fertile breeding ground for discontent and sin than does poverty." I would add that in good times we are more likely to seek God less and to be tempted more and to turn away from the Lord more. What are your thoughts? Do you seek the Lord more during good times or hard times? What kind of a time are you in now and are you seeking Him more or less?

Look at how the Lord responds to Samuel's prayer:

1 Samuel 8:7 And the Lord said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them."

The Lord makes it clear that the people are not rejecting Samuel, but rather HIM. The people have rejected God from being King over them. Have you had a time where you rejected the Lord from being King over your life? Perhaps you were willing for Jesus to be your Savior but not Lord over your life?

1 Samuel 8:8-9 According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. ⁹ Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them."

The Lord tells Samuel to obey the people and give them what they want but warn them of the consequences of their decisions. The same is true for us – if we continue to ask the Lord for something that is not His will for our life, He will give us what we want but there will be consequences. When have you ever gotten exactly what you wanted from the Lord only to realize it was not at all what He wanted? What were the consequence?

Eugene Petersen in his commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel says, "When people transfer their expectations for righteousness and salvation from God to government, they are sure to be disappointed. There are many things that human government is good for, but there are some things that it cannot do. And one of those things is to function as a

God substitute.” How have you seen our society try to substitute God with government?

After Samuel tells the people of the consequences that will come upon them if they chose to have a king for themselves, the people respond.

1 Samuel 8:19-20 But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, “No! But there shall be a king over us, ²⁰ that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”

The people want a king and say they want the king ‘that we also may be like the nations.’ They wanted to be like the people around them – not set apart for the Lord. When have you wanted to be more like the people around you than being set apart for the Lord? How have you adapted or acted differently in order to fit in or be accepted by a particular group? What were you willing to sacrifice to belong?

The people further disrespect the Lord by saying they want a king that will ‘go out before us and fight our battles.’ How quickly they forgot that the Lord is the one who went before them and fought their battles. The season of rest that they were in from battles with the Philistines was because of the Lord. How quickly do we forget what the Lord has done for us? How quick are we to want our own way rather than His way EVEN though we have seen His faithfulness in the past? What things do you need to recall that the Lord has done for you that perhaps you have forgotten? Take some time to recall all of his faithfulness to you.

The cry of the people of Israel was for a king and God was going to give them one. Let's look at what kind of man Saul was.

1 Samuel 9:1-2 There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. ²And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.

How is Saul described? How does this compare with the image of a king?

Saul was on a search for his father's donkeys and was looking for the man of God or seer to help him when he "ran" into Samuel.

1 Samuel 9:18-20 Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, "Tell me where is the house of the seer?" ¹⁹Samuel answered Saul, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for today you shall eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is on your mind. ²⁰As for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's house?"

Saul was just going about his life, doing regular stuff, searching for his father's lost donkeys when God called him. God calls people in the midst of their everyday lives. Think about the disciples who were fishing when Jesus called them to come follow him. He calls ordinary people in the midst of their ordinary lives to do extraordinary things for Him – if only they would be obedient to the call. *What has the Lord called you to do? When or how did it happen? Were you obedient to His call?*

1 Samuel 10:1 Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, "Has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the Lord and you will save them

from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the Lord has anointed you to be prince over his heritage.

Saul being anointed king was a private affair – it was only between Samuel and Saul. Eugene Peterson in his commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel says, “But the God-revealing moments 0 moments of obedient faith and faithful prayer – characteristically take place in obscurity, inaccessible to curious spectators.” It was true of God’s call on Abraham, it was true of Moses and the burning bush, it was true at the birth of Jesus. Amazing moments that are only witnessed by a small number of people. Have you been a witness to something amazing that few other people have seen or experienced?

This verse comes on the heels of Samuel having Saul send the servant on so the only people present as Saul is anointed King are Samuel and Saul.

1 Samuel 10:6-8 Then the Spirit of the Lord will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. ⁷ Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you. ⁸ Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do.”

Samuel tells him that he will offer sacrifices on behalf of Saul and that he is to WAIT seven days. How hard that must have been – to wait – to not be able to share it with anyone. If you received really big and amazing news how hard would it be for you to not share it with anyone? How hard is it for you to wait on the Lord? How patient are you most days?

1 Samuel 10:17-18 Now Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah. ¹⁸ And he said to the people of Israel, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.’ ¹⁹ But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities

and your distresses, and you have said to him, 'Set a king over us.' Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your thousands."

Samuel made it clear to the Israelites that in demanding a king they had rejected God. Have you ever rejected God? Have you ever kicked Him off the throne of your life and replaced Him with yourself or someone else?

1 Samuel 10:25 Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord. Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home.

Samuel made it clear to the people and to Saul what the Saul's rights and duties were as king. With the rights of kingship come responsibilities. There is never a time when we are put into leadership and receive rights without responsibilities; the two go hand in hand. Have you experienced someone in leadership who wanted the rights but not the responsibilities? Have you ever been that person?

1 Samuel 26-27 Saul also went to his home at Gibeah, and with him went men of valor whose hearts God had touched. ²⁷ But some worthless fellows said, "How can this man save us?" And they despised him and brought him no present. But he held his peace.

Clearly not everyone was a fan of Saul. I'm sure we can relate to that. Have you ever been promoted and not everyone was supported of your promotion or have you been put in charge of something and not everyone was on board with you leading the group? Did you hold your peace?

Romans 12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

James 1:19 *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;*

Saul was able to hold his tongue when some spoke out against him. How well do you hold your tongue when you are hurt, frustrated or angry? Ask the Lord if there is someone you need to make peace with, is there someone you need to be quick to listen to but slow to speak in response?

About a month after becoming King Saul is faced with his first major challenge.

1 Samuel 11:1-7a *Then Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead, and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you." 2 But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "On this condition I will make a treaty with you, that I gouge out all your right eyes, and thus bring disgrace on all Israel." 3 The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days' respite that we may send messengers through all the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save us, we will give ourselves up to you." 4 When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported the matter in the ears of the people, and all the people wept aloud. 5 Now, behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen. And Saul said, "What is wrong with the people, that they are weeping?" So they told him the news of the men of Jabesh. 6 And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. 7 He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hand of the messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!"*

J. Vernon McGee in his "Through the Bible Commentary" says this, "Notice how Saul identifies himself with Samuel. I do not think at this particular time that Saul's name could have stood alone" Samuel had been priest and judge over the people for years and Saul had only been king for a month so Saul used Samuel's name to give himself credibility. Have you ever used someone else's name to give you credibility or have you said 'they' said when it was really only a he or she?

After Saul said this look at the end of verse 7.

1 Samuel 11:7b *Then the dread of the Lord fell upon the people, and they came out as one man.*

Saul is bringing unity to the nation of Israel. They are no longer ruled by different judges but by one king. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see unity in our country? What role do you think we have as followers of Jesus in bringing unity to our country and how might we go about it?
