

TEACHING PLAN



I SAMUEL, *Chapters 1-19*
LUKE, *Chapters 19 & 14*

FEBRUARY

21

LIFE GROUPS

TEACHING PLAN

FW

Study of 1 Samuel

FEBRUARY 7

21

REPENT, RESCUE, REMEMBER

1 SAMUEL 7:3-17

FEBRUARY 7, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying 1 Samuel 7. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: GOD WANTS US TO REMEMBER THAT HE HEARS OUR REPENTANT CRY FOR HELP AND HAS COME TO OUR RESCUE.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: IN THIS WORLD WHERE THREATS CONTINUE TO COME AT US, WE ARE HELPLESS APART FROM GOD'S SAVING GRACE.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS GAVE UP HIS VERY LIFE TO RESCUE US WHEN WE WERE WANDERING, AND HE IS OUR HELP UNTIL HE COMES AGAIN TO TAKE US HOME.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 Listen to the song, “Come Thou Fount.” [There are numerous versions on Spotify. Consider, for example, “Come Thou Fount,” Mercy Me, The Worship Sessions]. What lyrics do you relate to the most personally? Why?
- 2 Would you say that you are “prone to wander”? Why? Is that simply a statement of fact for all people or is there something that can be done so that we do not wander from the Lord?
- 3 The original hymn by Robert Robinson (1758) includes the lyric, “Here I raise my Ebenezer, hither by Thy help I’ve come.” Considering the context of the song, what do you think that means?

Sometimes we might sing lyrics to songs without understanding the words or meaning behind them. However, today’s Scripture passage is the basis for one old familiar hymn—“Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing”—and, in fact, contains lyrics that come directly from that passage.

In 1 Samuel 4–7, we find that Israel had, indeed, wandered from the Lord. They took the ark of the covenant into battle as if it were a good luck charm of sorts. In that battle, the Philistines defeated Israel and took the ark of the covenant. This news was so distressing that upon hearing it, Eli fell backwards in his chair, broke his neck, and died (4:18).

Still, after losing the ark of the covenant, Israel was not repentant. It took 20 years before they were ready to ask Samuel to lead them in a full return to the Lord. It is at this point in Israel’s history that today’s lesson begins.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 7:3-6.

Genuine, heartfelt repentance seemed to have arrived at last; however, Samuel knew Israel couldn't just give lip service. They needed to demonstrate their decision to return to the Lord.

- What "if . . . then" statement did Samuel give in verse 3? What specifically did Samuel indicate Israel's repentance would entail?
- If the people had put away their idols, then why did Samuel also lead them to pray and fast (vv. 5-6)?

God would rescue His people when they turned to Him, and turning to Him required true repentance. This involved a verbal confession of sins in prayer, an outward act of physically removing idols, and an inner turning from pride to humility before the Lord through fasting. Fasting acknowledged the seriousness of their sin and their sincere and desperate desire to be cleansed from it.

- Is it possible for a person to truly turn to the Lord and not fully repent? Explain.
- How might this idea of half-hearted relationship with God help us understand why it took Israel 20 years to get to this point?
- What might half-hearted relationship with God look like in the church today? In contrast, what would be involved in true repentance?

There is a marked difference between generally knowing who God is and truly believing Him for who He is and applying those truths to daily living. Israel had a storied history with God and knew full well who He was; however, they allowed their decisions to be directed by earthly circumstances and human feelings instead. They knew God, but their hearts were far from God. It wasn't until they confessed their infidelity to the Lord (7:6), put away their idols (7:4), came together in humble repentance (7:5), and fasted (7:6) that they truly returned to the Lord in faith.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 7:7-11.

- In light of verses 3-6, does verse 7 surprise you? Do you think Israel was surprised to find out that upon returning to the Lord they still had difficulties to face?
- Read 1 Samuel 4:3-4. How did Israel respond differently in 1 Samuel 7:8 to the difficult battle they faced? Why?
- What was the result of Israel's turning to the Lord for help in humble repentance?

Israel's previous defeat and shame of the previous 20 years turned to joyful victory. This was not accomplished in and of themselves, nor was it accomplished by the worship of a holy artifact. God alone is worthy of our worship, and when we turn to Him in full faith, He is ready and fully able to generously rescue us in a way that is above and beyond what we could even ask or imagine.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 7:12-17.

- Ebenezer means “stone of help.” Recall the lyrics in “Come Thou Fount.” How does the context of verse 12 aid in your understanding of the hymn lyric, “Here I raise my Ebenezer, hither by Thy help I’ve come”?
- Why do you think Samuel said “Thus far”? What was he wanting Israel to know about their present and their future?
- Why did Samuel feel it necessary to set up a stone to commemorate this moment in Israel’s history? Why is it important to remember how God has rescued us in the past? What are some ways He has done that for all of us, and what are some ways we can always remember and praise Him for it?

Notes:

Samuel wanted God’s people to always remember God’s intervention on their behalf when they humbled themselves and turned to Him in repentance and belief. They had been unfaithful and did not deserve for God to rescue them, but He heard their honest cry and intervened. This was no slim margin of victory; God fully rescued them from their enemies and gave them peace in the land.

- Considering what Israel had done with the ark of the covenant in chapter 4, how might the people have reacted wrongly in regard to the stone? What does it look like to idolize the memory of a past victory? In contrast, what does it look like to remember and praise God alone for past victories?

God has rescued us above and beyond what we can ask or imagine, too, through His Son Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. That rescue has impact for today. It impacts our inner thoughts, the words we articulate, and our outward behaviors. God wants us to remember that He hears our repentant cry for help and has come to our rescue. His rescue doesn't mean we won't do battle in this world, but in our battles we can turn to God in faith and obedience, recognizing that we are truly helpless apart from His saving grace.

Notes:

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- Today's passage can be outlined this way: repent (vv. 3-6), rescue (vv. 7-11), and remember (vv. 12-17). Which of those three words stands out to you the most personally in your own relationship with the Lord? Explain.
- Oftentimes, we move on to whatever is next all too quickly. What is something God has done in your life lately for which you need to take some time to remember and praise Him? Outside of confessing that need to this group, what would that look like?
- As Israel had done with the ark of the covenant, what might be some good things we, as a group and as a church, might be tempted to turn to or idolize in place of the Lord Himself? How can we guard against it?

PRAY

Praise God for rescuing you from death and giving you eternal life through the blood sacrifice of Jesus. Confess your tendency to ignore or forget His past work on your behalf and to rely on other things besides simple faith and reliance on Him.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - Is there an area of disobedience (inwardly or outwardly) of which you need to repent in order to fully turn to the Lord in faith?
 - What steps are you taking to remember the work of God in your life this week?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize 1 Samuel 7:12.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: 1 Samuel 8:1-21.

1 SAMUEL 7:2-17

7:2-6. Twenty years passed while the ark remained at Kiriath Jearim. But the people were not silent. Instead of mourning over “the heavy blow the Lord had dealt them” (6:19), they now lamented after the Lord (7:2). Samuel arrived back on the scene. He had been absent since the time that Israel had gone out to fight the Philistines at Ebenezer (4:1b). What takes place in this chapter is in direct contrast to the first debacle at Ebenezer. Samuel led Israel to follow the proper steps in seeking God’s help. The difference is clear, and the result was dramatic.

Notes:

In order for God to help them against the Philistines, Samuel called Israel to a holy repentance before God (7:3). The language used here is similar to that of Jacob (Gen. 35:2-4) and Joshua (Josh. 24:14-15). Several factors are involved in true repentance.

Israel’s repentance must be genuine. They must return to God with all their hearts. It must also be tangible. The people of God must rid themselves of the foreign gods in their homes and in their hearts. Since these gods were often represented in idol form, this must be a concrete action, physically removing and destroying the idol. In this they were to follow the first commandment (Exod. 20:3).

Their repentance would also be difficult because it would fly in the face of the surrounding culture. Samuel clearly stated that the Ashtoreths must also be forsaken. Ashtoreth was the name of the goddess known in Canaan as Ashtar or Astarte, the consort of Baal. Canaanite religion was essentially a fertility cult. Sexual rites were part of its worship.

From the time of Joshua’s death and onward, Israel was tempted to believe that the Baals and the Ashtoreths were responsible for the growth of their crops (Judg. 2:13). Only “establishing” their hearts (commit yourselves) to the Lord and serving him would help Israel stand against such temptation. The people of Israel responded positively

to Samuel's call for repentance by putting away their idols and worshiping only the Lord (7:4).

Israel completed the first step (repentance) in seeking God's will. They were ready for the next step, so Samuel called a solemn assembly at Mizpah (7:5). This town was located about five miles north of Jerusalem on the main north-south road through the central highlands. The solemn assembly included prayer, fasting, and confession of sin.

Notes:

Israel also performed a water libation before the Lord (7:6). This is the only time Israel did so in a religious convocation, and its significance must not be overlooked (cp. Jonah 3:7; 2 Sam. 23:16).

Now for the first time in the book, Samuel is identified as a "judge" or leader of Israel (7:6b). His ministry was accepted here at Mizpah. He would follow in the footsteps of the best of the judges before him, and he would lead Israel to the one from whose seed the Messiah would come.

7:7-11. While Samuel and Israel were busy seeking the Lord, the Philistines caught wind of the assembly at Mizpah and decided to attack. Instead of trying to manipulate God with the ark, this time Israel turned to intercession. They pleaded with Samuel to continue to cry out to the Lord for them (7:8).

Quickly Samuel offered a blood sacrifice, a suckling lamb as a whole burnt offering to the Lord (7:9). While he was doing so, the Lord heard his cry on behalf of repentant Israel and answered him. The Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines (7:10). They were thrown into such a panic that the Israelites routed them and pursued them all the way to a point below Beth Car (7:11). The location of Beth Car is not known, but what is certain is that God gave the Israelites a mighty victory that day. Without the ark at hand, God turned the shame of the defeat of chapter 4 into the rejoicing of triumph.

In the wake of Israel's rout of the Philistines, Samuel set up a stone monument, a new religious symbol. Samuel named it Ebenezer and explained its significance: Thus far has the Lord helped us (7:12). The Ebenezer mentioned here is regarded by many as a different place than the site mentioned in 4:1.

Notes:

By doing this Samuel sought to keep the memory of God's deliverance current in Israel's mind. He wanted Israel to remember the past and be thankful for God's help. Remembering God's help in the past also encourages hope for the future, and hope sustains faith. The Philistines were subdued, and throughout Samuel's lifetime the hand of the Lord was against them (7:13). The towns captured by the Philistines were restored to Israel. The Philistines ceased to be a dominant power in the area, and there was peace (7:14).

7:15-17. These verses summarize Samuel's career as a judge. The Hebrew verb "judge" (shapat) occurs in each verse. Samuel continued to judge Israel all the days of his life. He became a circuit rider, annually going from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah and back to Ramah (7:16). Since Samuel built an altar at Ramah, it is most likely that Shiloh had been destroyed by the Philistines.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of 1 Samuel</i>
	FEBRUARY 14	21

ISRAEL DEMANDS A KING

1 SAMUEL 8:1-21

FEBRUARY 14, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying 1 Samuel 8:1-21. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: ONLY GOD IS WORTHY OF BEING LOOKED TO AS THE RULER OF HIS PEOPLE AND OF HIS CREATION.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WHEN WE SEE THE WHOLE WORLD OPERATING A DIFFERENT WAY, WE STRUGGLE TO CHOOSE GOD'S WAY AND TRUST HIM IN THAT CHOICE.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: IN THE MIDST OF THEIR SIN, GOD PROMISED HIS PEOPLE A COMING KING FROM THE LINE OF DAVID WHO WOULD RULE OVER THEM WITH JUSTICE, MERCY, AND HOLINESS (2 SAMUEL 7:8-15; LUKE 1:30-33; MATTHEW 1:1-17).

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 When in your life have you wanted something, only to be disappointed once you finally got it (i.e. a certain job, the latest piece of technology, or a particular type of car). What led to your disappointment?
- 2 What do our desires to have what isn't ours teach us about our hearts?

God had called His people to be unique among the peoples of the earth. While nations had kings that ruled over them, God's people did not need an earthly king (Lev. 20:26). God Himself ruled over them and led them. However, God's people looked at the nations around them, envied their kings, and demanded to have one for themselves. They wanted a human ruler so they could be like other nations.

- 3 What are your expectations of a leader? What are the qualities of a leader that inspire your trust?

While most of the judges led the nation in battle, Samuel's ministry as a judge demonstrated what Israel truly needed: righteousness, repentance, and a return to the Lord. The Lord God could be all the King that His people ever needed. Unfortunately, the Israelites were blind to such a vision. God warned His people of the troubles that would come from putting their hopes in earthly kings, but they did not relent. God gave the people over to their own selfish desires, and the results were disastrous. Of the kings that ruled over Israel, few honored the Lord with their leadership.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> Ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 8:1-9.

- Who were the judges (see Deut. 16:18-20)? What function did the judges serve in the life of the people of Israel?
- First Samuel 8:1-3 describes the poor leadership of Samuel's sons during their time as judges. What insight do these verses give us into the struggles the Israelites faced under the judges?
- Now read verses 4-5 and 19-20. What reasons did Israel's elders give in their request for a king? What was their real reason, according to verse 7?
- How did Samuel respond to the elders? What is the key difference between Samuel's response to the elders and the elders' response to their situation?
- What was wrong with Israel's desire to have a king?

The judges were leaders in the tribes of Israel who were given the task of judging the people of Israel with equity and righteousness. These leaders were to have exemplary character and pursue justice in the land that God had promised them. At the point we pick up this story, Samuel, who was a righteous judge, handed over leadership to his sons. After their appointment, his sons did not model his leadership and the people of Israel grumbled for a king like the other nations around them. Israel wanted what everyone else had. In wanting what the nations

had, they exposed the sin in their hearts. God's people were to be different and separate from all the nations of the earth. While nations had kings, God alone was Creator and ruler over Israel. The people of Israel rejected God as their King and demanded another. God would answer their request.

Notes:

- Describe a time when you rejected God's rule because you thought you knew best. What happened as a result, and what finally opened your eyes to the problem?
- What are some ways we continue to reject God's plans in favor of a life that looks more like the world around us?

A fundamental principle of God's Word is that God, and God alone, was Israel's King (Ex. 15:18; Ps. 10:16; 24:10; 93:1). The people of Israel rejected their true leader for a leader they could see, who they foolishly believed would secure their borders and lead to their national prosperity. What they did not realize is that any real security and prosperity they had ultimately came from God. When God made Israel, He desired for them to live with Him forever, yet the people rejected God's rule.

Any time we choose our way over God's, we embrace a life that is less than God's best for us. In wanting what everyone else had, the people of Israel missed what made them unique. Our need to rebel against God and pursue our own way shows us the deep need each of us have to have our hearts, desires, and wills redeemed. Our desire for a king can only be fulfilled by the One True King.

> Ask a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 8:10-22.

- What warnings did Samuel give the people of Israel about the king they sought?
- Why were the people willing to ignore these warnings?
- Why does God seem to “give in” to their request? What does this teach us about Him?
- When are you inclined to do something just to be “like everyone else”? What does that desire communicate to God?

Notes:

God listens to His people, and in this case, He gave them over to the sinful desires of their heart. When the people demanded a king, it was a rejection of all that God had called them to be. As in the past, the people of Israel were more interested in what they wanted in the moment than the place that God was leading them.

Before the gospel can be “good news” to us, there has to be bad news. Reaffirming the truth of Psalm 14, Paul wrote that “no one is righteous” and there is “no one who seeks God.” He said that “all have turned away” (Rom. 3:10-12). The gospel teaches us that we are more sinful than we ever dared imagine. All people are alike in their rejection of God. Yet in His grace, God used the people’s sinful desire to have a king to point them to the perfect and true coming king through His servant David—Jesus the Messiah.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- What does your desire for more teach you about your attitude toward God? How can you learn to be content with what God has given you?
- All people are either pursuing the kingdom of God or the kingdom of this world. Which have you been living for? What needs to change?
- The people of Israel gathered together and demanded a king. The church has been called together to remember and praise the true and right-ful king. As we live together as followers of Christ, what are some ways we can express our appreciation for King Jesus?
- How does living under the lordship of Jesus change the way you relate to the world around you on a daily basis?

PRAY

Praise God for the coming kingdom and the coming King. Pray that He would give you a desire for this King and His kingdom in your heart, that you would live every day eagerly awaiting the joy that is to come when He comes and brings the kingdom to us in its fullness.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - In what situation(s) are you tempted to not trust God's leadership in your life?
 - How is God currently at work in your life to lead or change you? What steps do you need to take to acknowledge your trust in Him in that process?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize 1 Samuel 8:9.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: 1 Samuel 10:17-27.

1 SAMUEL 8:1-21

8:1-5. What was Samuel thinking? Had he forgotten the moral failure of Hophni and Phinehas? (2:12-17). Did he not remember the sorrow of Eli and the judgment of God against Eli's house? (2:27-36). In appointing his own sons as judges, perhaps Samuel did not believe that they would turn aside for dishonest gain.

Notes:

Judges were to be appointed for each tribe and town (Deut. 16:18-20). But judges were to be fair and impartial. They were to "pursue justice" (Deut. 16:20). Samuel's sons were appointed to serve in Beersheba in the Negev. But Joel and Abijah did not walk in Samuel's ways. They perverted justice by accepting bribes (8:3). But to Samuel's credit they turned aside only after they were appointed. Their immoral behavior was certainly a departure from God's will, and it was bound to create problems. It could not be ignored.

Complaints must have reached the ears of the elders, and perhaps the elders did not want to cause a scene with Samuel. But they needed to do something. The last time the elders of Israel are mentioned as a group occurs in Deuteronomy 31:28. But now they gathered together in some type of ruling council or official delegation to address the problem. The people would not tolerate another series of failed judgeships.

The elders, however, chose to correct a wrong with another wrong. There was no praying and seeking of the Lord's face. There were no solemn assemblies—no crying out to God. The elders simply demanded that Samuel appoint a king to lead the nation, such as all the other nations have (8:5).

First and foremost in the request was the desire for uncorrupt judges. The Hebrew infinitive translated "to lead" in the NIV is literally "to judge." They wanted a king to administrate the legal system. Perhaps the elders felt that a king would hold local judges more accountable. A second concern was certainly political (8:20). The elders wanted

a political monarch who would defeat oppressive enemies. They wanted a king just like the surrounding nations.

Everybody else was doing it. Why shouldn't Israel jump on the political bandwagon and have a king? The trouble was that a fundamental teaching of the Torah was that Israel was to be distinct from all the other nations (Lev. 20:26; Num. 23:9). God, and God alone, was Israel's king (Exod. 15:18; Pss. 10:16; 24:10; 93:1; 95:3).

Notes:

8:6-9. The request of the elders for a king displeased Samuel (8:6; lit. "was evil in the eyes of Samuel"). But Samuel wisely took the request to the Lord. The tendency today is to answer immediately, to "shoot from the hip." Samuel knew, however, that wisdom came from God (Prov. 2:6; see also James 1:5; 3:17).

God's response to Samuel's prayer was direct and to the point (8:7-9). He directed Samuel to respond in three ways. First, God told Samuel to listen to the voice of the people (v. 7). The Hebrew verb "to listen" contains the idea of "heeding" or "obeying." In an emphatic way, God wanted Samuel to know that Israel had not rejected him as judge, but they had rejected God as king.

God's response to Samuel in verse 8 shows that the motivation of the elders was wrong. The request was self-centered and carnal. They wanted a king like "all the other nations." What was in operation here was a longstanding pattern of sinful rejection. Israel had continuously rejected God. From the day he rescued them out of Egypt until then, they had turned their backs on him and served other gods. Samuel was now getting a taste of what Israel had done for generations.

Secondly, God wanted Samuel to warn them solemnly (v. 9a); the Hebrew text says literally, "warning you shall warn them." The rejection of God and his covenant involved serious consequences (Josh. 24:19-20). God wanted to remind them that covenantal promise of the land was conditional. Finally, God wanted them to know

the actions and deeds of the king who would reign over them like the other nations (v. 9b).

8:10-18. Samuel did just what God asked and repeated all the words of the Lord to the people (8:10). This sober description tells the people what they could expect from a king. Four times the Hebrew text uses the verb “he will take” (vv. 11, 13, 14, 16).

Notes:

Samuel’s description reveals that a king would establish a permanent bureaucratic institution based on two primary branches of government. First, the king would call up a permanent military. Israelites would be forced to serve in the royal honor guard (v. 11), in the cavalry (v. 11), in the officer corps (v. 12), in the production of weapons (v. 12), and in the production of the army’s food supply.

Second, Samuel noted that a king would need administrative support. From the ranks of the general population would come perfumers (v. 13), cooks and bakers (v. 13), and general laborers and draft animals (v. 16). In order to support all this, the king would need to appropriate the best fields and vineyards (v. 14). The “subjects” would have to pay a tenth of their grain, vintage, and flocks (vv. 15,17). In effect, the people would become the king’s slaves (v. 17). Through Samuel, God warned Israel that they would soon cry out for relief from the king they were demanding (v. 18). But on that day, the Lord would not answer them.

8:19-22. Despite the solemn warning of Samuel, the people still refused to listen (v. 19). They demanded a king! They wanted to follow the crowd, to be like all the other nations (v. 20). They wanted a human king to judge them and to lead them into battle.

Samuel repeated the words of the people before the Lord (v. 21). The Lord then agreed to give them a king (v. 22). In response, Samuel dismissed the elders and men to return to their towns. God would give them a king, but he would do it his way.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of 1 Samuel</i>
	FEBRUARY 21	21

A RELUCTANT KING

1 SAMUEL 10:17-27

FEBRUARY 21, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying 1 Samuel 10: 17-27. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: GOD IS OUR ULTIMATE LEADER, AND HE GIVES US EARTHLY LEADERS TO HELP US FOLLOW HIM.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WE LIVE IN A CULTURE OF SPIRITUAL FANDOM. WE FOLLOW CERTAIN SPIRITUAL LEADERS AND ARE TEMPTED TO DEPEND ON THEM TO DO THE WORK GOD IS CALLING US EACH TO STEP UP AND DO IN THE CHURCH, IN THE WORLD, AND EVEN IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP TO GOD.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: GOD PROMISED HIS PEOPLE A COMING KING FROM THE LINE OF DAVID WHO WOULD RULE OVER THEM WITH JUSTICE, MERCY, AND HOLINESS (2 SAM. 7:8-15; LUKE 1:30-33; MATT. 1:1-17).

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 Have you ever had a new opportunity to serve or lead and felt ill equipped or even afraid to do so? What happened?
- 2 Who is someone you admire as a leader? Why?
- 3 In what areas of life do you think you most need someone to lead you?

As we saw in last week's lesson, God's people wanted a king to lead them. Though God warned them they did not need an earthly king but needed to trust Him—the One Eternal King—to continue to lead them, their hearts and minds were set. Even though it was sinful to ask God for an earthly king, God showed His love and grace by directing Samuel to anoint a king who would be given every help and opportunity to honor Him as Israel's leader.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 10:17-19.

Israel had demanded a king, and now God would give them one. Not coincidentally, Samuel directed the people to gather together at Mizpah, the site where they had previously renewed their covenant to God (7:5).

- What did God want to remind the people before He chose a king for them? Why?

Notes:

Israel had never needed a king. God was their King! He had lovingly led them and provided for all their needs. He had miraculously brought them out of Egypt and delivered them from every nation that had threatened them on their way to Canaan. And He continued to lead and provide for them as enemies were still challenging their right to the Promised Land.

- In your own words, what was God saying to the people in verse 19?

Samuel made it clear the people had sinned by asking for a king at this point in their history. However, God would not force Himself on them. He would allow them to reject Him and suffer the consequences.

- Why is God qualified to be our king?
- Why do we reject Him as our king and look, instead, to earthly leaders to do for us what only God can do?
- How might this passage speak to us now in 2021?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 10:20-24.

- What might God have been wanting to communicate by announcing the identity of Israel's king by lot instead of through some form of a democratic process?

God's guidance of the process of casting lots would verify to the people and again to Saul what He had already made clear—Saul was His choice for Israel's king.

Notes:

- Why were the people so excited when they found out that Saul was their new king?
- Read the description of Jesus in Isaiah 53:2. Considering this, does it seem strange to you that in this instance, God chose someone who stood out physically among the people? Why might He have done this?
- Based on verses 17-19, why might Saul have been hiding, reluctant to be recognized as Israel's first king?

Saul did not become king because of personal ambition. In fact, he seemed to resist the call of God to serve Israel in this capacity. He was humble and embarrassed to be pulled into the limelight. This was a stark contrast to his physical appearance, which was apparently so impressive that it instilled an expectation and confidence in the people they had been lacking. Though strange to consider, it is much like we act today. We often demonstrate that we long more for leadership from God's people we deem impressive than from God Himself.

- Do you think God still calls people today who don't bother to show up to answer that call? Explain.
- How does the church suffer when we don't step into the unique gifts and calling God has placed on each of our lives?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 10:25-27.

Samuel telling the people the rights and duties of the king was a reminder of his warning about the cost of having a king (8:11-18). This was a major turning point in Israel's history. Samuel wrote these rights of kingship on a scroll as a lasting testimony or covenant between the people and their king. Then he placed them in the tabernacle to demonstrate God's authority and oversight of the process. God would hold His people accountable for their decision.

Notes:

- With what sort of mood or attitude do you imagine most of the people headed back home after hearing the duties of kingship?
- How would you characterize Saul at the beginning of his reign as king? What sort of men had God placed around him (v. 26)?

The Lord provided for Saul a godly army of men to help him as he began to rule Israel. Not everyone was a source of encouragement, however. There were some wicked men who did not approve of Saul as king, likely because of his timidity in accepting the position. Saul ignored their objections, though others would remember it (11:12).

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- How do we balance knowing that God does call us to follow the spiritual leaders He gives us with knowing that He alone is truly our King? What struggles, if any, are there for you in that?
- How are we doing at First Woodway in this area as a whole? Do we depend too much on the leaders God has given us here to do the work we are each called to do? Generally speaking, are we eager or reluctant servants?
- What are some tasks God has called each one of us to as servants in His kingdom? How can we encourage each other in that?

PRAY

Thank God for His lovingkindness in continuing to lead you. Thank Him also for the people He has put in your life to help you follow Him. Ask Him to show you where you have been reluctant to step up and fulfill the calling He has placed on your life and to give you the wisdom and courage to step into that calling.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - Is there something God has been calling you to do that you've been hiding from? How is God speaking to you about that this week?

 - What is one way you can show healthy support to the spiritual leaders God has placed in your life?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize Psalm 47:7-8

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: 1 Samuel 12:1-25.

1 SAMUEL 10:17-24

In time Samuel summoned the people of Israel to come before the Lord at Mizpah. In his introductory speech, Samuel reminded them that they had rejected the God who brought them out of the land of Egypt and delivered them from their enemies during the time of the judges (vv. 18-19). Israel had demanded a king, so now was the time to do so by presenting themselves before the Lord by their tribes and clans.

Notes:

The exact process used in selecting the king is not revealed; although the Urim and Thummim may have been used to do so (Exod. 28:30). Samuel knew that the leaders who coveted the kingship would not be satisfied with his testimony alone. God would have to do the choosing. The only other individual identified by the use of a similar method was Achan, who stole from the Lord (Josh. 7:16-18).

We are not told what may have gone through Saul's mind as the public convocation began. The climax was the dramatic selection of a king. Out of all the tribes of Israel, Saul's tribe of Benjamin was chosen. Then, when the clans of Benjamin were brought forward, Saul's clan was chosen. Certainly the drama was intensified. Who among this clan would be chosen?

Finally, the lot fell on Saul, the son of Kish. But when they looked for him he was nowhere to be found (v. 21). Perhaps they couldn't believe that God would choose a man who hadn't even shown up. Further inquiry was sought from the Lord, and unbelievably, it turned out that Saul was hiding among the baggage (v. 22). Saul's shyness may account for his actions. But it is also possible that his refusal to step forward may foreshadow his later lack of commitment to take up the responsibilities that fell upon a godly ruler. Samuel appears to deflect the shy behavior of Saul by pointing out his unusual height, and the people confirmed the choice (v. 24) by shouting, Long live the king!

10:25-27. Many scholars see the action listed in verse 25 as one of the crucial turning points in Israel's history. The narrative passes over the significant event with a mere statement of seven Hebrew words. We are simply told that Samuel declared the regulations of the kingship to the people. He first declared these to the people, and then he wrote them down in a scroll. The exact contents of the document are unknown. It possibly contained the stipulations for a king laid down by Moses in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Samuel may have given a copy to Saul, but the original was deposited at the Mizpah sanctuary. The purpose of this Mizpah covenant was to distinguish Israel's kingship from that of the surrounding nations. It would remind Saul to fear the true King of Israel.

Notes:

Having finished the convocation, Samuel dismissed the people. An unknown number of valiant men went with him (v. 26). God had touched the hearts of these men, and they were willing to make a difference.

God's chosen leaders are not without their detractors. Several troublemakers publicly objected to Saul's coronation. They refused to give Saul the customary tokens of goodwill. Saul responded with grace. He kept silent (v. 27). Further confirmation of his leadership would come in the days ahead.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of 1 Samuel</i>
	FEBRUARY 28	21

SAMUEL'S FAREWELL SPEECH

1 SAMUEL 12:1-25

FEBRUARY 28, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying 1 Samuel 12:1-25. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: GOD'S CHARACTER AND POWER DEMAND REVERENTIAL FEAR.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WE SOMETIMES MAKE VERY BAD DECISIONS, DECISIONS THAT CAN NEVER BE FULLY UNDONE. WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND HOW GOD WANTS US TO RELATE TO HIM IN THOSE BAD DECISIONS.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: GOD FORGIVES. THE CLEAREST PICTURE OF HIS HEART OF FORGIVENESS IS SEEN IN THE CRUCIFIXION OF HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 What is a memorable farewell speech you have heard?
- 2 If you were preparing a farewell speech, what would you most want people to know?

What at first appeared to be the public inauguration of Saul as king became Samuel's farewell address to the nation and includes his lengthiest speech. As one might expect, Samuel's last words to the people touched on what was most important. Samuel called on Israel to renew their covenant with God. Part of their responsibility in this covenant was to fear God.

- 3 What is the difference between fearing the Lord and fearing people or things?

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 12:1-12.

This chapter marks one of Israel's most significant moments—the end of the loose confederation of judges and the beginning of the Israelite monarchy. From this point forward, the nation would be evaluated in terms of whether the king did good or evil in the eyes of the Lord (see 1 Kings 11:6; 15:26; 16:25; 2 Kings 8:18; 10:30).

- From verses 1-5, what did Samuel want the people to know about him? Why?

Notes:

Samuel established his credentials first by asking if anyone had cause to accuse him of having abused his power. If he had behaved in such a manner, he would have had no moral authority to rebuke them or to lay down God's requirements. Since no one could make such a charge, he told them to brace themselves for what he had to say.

- From verses 5-12, what did Samuel want the people to know about God? Why?
- From verse 12, what did Samuel want his audience to know about themselves? Why?

God had always saved Israel from their troubles. For hundreds of years God had proven that He could save Israel from any foe, as long as they put aside their idols and turned to Him for help. But now they were placing their hope in an earthly king.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 12:12-18.

- What role did fear play in the demand for a king?
- Identify the directives given in these verses. How does obeying these directives show trust in God?
- How would having a king change the relationship between God and His people? How would it be different? How would it be the same? How do you see God at work in your life despite the times when you have failed to follow Him?

Israel went from being a loose confederation with no central government to being a monarchy. Political and social life would be radically different. In another sense, nothing had changed. The terms that set the relationship between God and Israel were found in the Sinai Covenant (Ex. 19–24). Israel was to show devotion to God by keeping His commands and especially by shunning idols and other gods. Doing this, they would love God with all their hearts. And Israel was to respect the rights, persons, and property of others. Doing this, they would love their neighbors. If they did these things, God would keep them safe and well. When Israel adopted a monarchy, they would still be judged by these terms. They would be under God’s protection as long as they kept the covenant and stayed away from idols. Both the king and the people had to keep the covenant, and in that sense, being under a monarchy would make no difference in regard to how they related to God.

Notes:

- What was the purpose of the thunderstorm in verses 16-18?
- Bearing in mind that even insurance companies often use the phrase “acts of God” to describe catastrophic weather events, why are people more likely to recognize God’s power after an unexpected weather occurrence?
- What aspects of nature best represent God’s power and character? Explain. How do these aspects cause us to revere Him?

When Samuel called down rain in the normally dry month of May, he was doing two things. First, he was demonstrating that the words he was about to speak truly came from God. Second, the rain at harvest time was a vivid metaphor. Storms in May implied that the harvest would be ruined; by analogy, Israel’s request for a king would end badly. Samuel had warned the people that having a king would be economically ruinous for them. The king would seize their lands, their cattle, their

servants, and even conscript their children (1 Sam. 8:11-18). Thus, their king would come down upon them and their fields like a storm out of season.

- What does it mean to fear the Lord? Read Exodus 20:20 and Proverbs 1:7; 2:5 for insight. What does fearing the Lord look like on a daily basis?

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 12:19-25.

- What was the Israelites' plea? What was Samuel's response?
- How would you describe the difference between godly fear and sinful fear?

No one denied what Israel had done was wrong, and there was no taking it back. However, God is forgiving and redeems our bad decisions. The Israelites would need to do two things. First, they should remain loyal to God and not turn away from following Him. Sometimes, our sin can so discourage us that we give up entirely. People abandon the faith not because they are angry at God but because they are convinced that their guilt is so terrible that they cannot possibly come back. They should resolve to continue to serve God and to do what is right even though their actions make them feel unworthy. Second, they should shun all idols. If the people would simply place their trust in God, He would continue to watch over them and sustain them, king or no king.

- Read Psalm 112:7 and Proverbs 3:25-26. What does God say about the fear of bad news in these verses? How can we avoid succumbing to the fear of the unknown?

- Knowing Samuel was frustrated with the Israelites for demanding a king, consider Samuel's final remarks to the people of Israel. How did Samuel show grace to the Israelites?

Notes:

- Describe the balance between God's judgment and His grace. When can they complement each other? When do we see both working simultaneously?

Even very big, very bad decisions do not mean that our relationship with God is forever ruined. To a great extent, it is not changed at all. God forgives, and the clearest picture of His heart of forgiveness is seen in the crucifixion of His Son, Jesus Christ. What God wants both before and after our bad decisions is that we fear and serve Him, that we grow in faith and grace, and that we love one another.

The Israelites made a bad decision that changed their nation forever. Nevertheless, God's marching orders for them—that they keep the Sinai Covenant—remained the same. No matter what we have done, God's marching orders for us remain unchanged: that we should believe and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

No matter how many times we fail God, we should never be afraid to run to Him.

- Read again 1 Samuel 12:20. When has God helped you overcome something you greatly feared?
- In your present circumstances, what relationship is there between fear and trust?
- Regardless of your past sins, what are God's directives to you today? How can this group encourage you in that?

PRAY

Thank God for His everlasting covenant with you made through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Confess your sinfulness. Ask Him to forgive you and empower you to have a healthy fear of Him, living a God-honoring life.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - What sins come between you and God? How does 1 Samuel 12 speak to you about that?

 - Practically speaking, what would it look like for you to demonstrate a healthy fear of God this week?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize 1 Samuel 12:20.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: 1 Samuel 13:1-15.

1 SAMUEL 12:1-25

12:1-5. Speaking before all Israel gathered at Gilgal, Samuel started by confirming that he had done what the people had asked and set a king over them (12:1). This is no insignificant statement. Here Israel again stood at a crossroad of faith and must ultimately choose in which direction to go. The choice would have far-reaching consequences.

Notes:

Three interpretive issues underscore the power of this chapter. First, three of Samuel's six longest discourses are recorded here, including his longest (205 words in Hebrew). Second, the poignancy of Samuel's urgency is heard in his use of the Hebrew particle "now" in verses 2, 7, 13, and 16. Each use of "now" divides the chapter into its four major subsections. Finally, three literary devices are interwoven in the passage. What appears at first to be a farewell speech quickly moves into a prophetic oracle as Samuel issued stern warnings, called on heavenly portents, and challenged Israel to reject the sins of the past. At the same time, underneath the speech and prophetic oracle is a renewal ceremony emphasizing Israel's accountability to the covenant.

In essence, Samuel's actions show that covenant leadership must be held accountable on three levels. First, Samuel appealed to the Lord as a witness (12:5). Ultimately, he knew that as a covenant leader he was first and foremost accountable to the God of Israel. Servant leaders must remember that their ultimate accountability is to God (Ezek. 34:10; Matt. 12:36-37; Rom. 3:19; Heb. 9:27).

Samuel also appealed to the Lord's anointed (12:5). In the immediate context, this meant Saul, the king, who was anointed to rule over Israel. Samuel the judge opened his ministry to Saul's scrutiny. In the same way, servant leaders are also to be accountable to one another (James 5:16).

Finally, Samuel began his farewell speech by inviting the people to examine his public ministry (12:3). Samuel was

in fact declaring that he was subject to the same ethical standards as the people. By this we learn that covenant leadership is also accountable to the people of God. Servant leaders are not above the people; the same standards by which the people are judged also apply to them.

Notes:

12:6-12. In verse 6, Samuel reminded Israel that the Lord established Moses and Aaron as leaders to bring their forefathers up out of Egypt. As Samuel stood on trial before the people to give an account of his covenant faithfulness (12:1-5), so too it was time for Israel to stand and be confronted with the evidence of all the righteous acts performed by the Lord on their behalf (12:7). The trial motif of verse 3 is maintained, but this time the people are the defendants.

The threat of Nahash the Ammonite was no different than before (12:12). But this time, Israel lost faith in God's divine pattern of deliverance. Instead of trusting the Lord to provide their salvation, Israel demanded a king like the nations around them. In effect, Israel broke the covenant by rejecting the Lord God as their true king.

12:13-15. Continuing his speech, Samuel turned and pointed to Saul and identified him as the king you have chosen, the one you asked for (12:13). Israel was not to think that the covenant was done away with because God had given them a new type of leader. The king, too, was subject to the stipulations and requirements of the covenant.

The blessings and curses of the Sinai covenant are summarized by Samuel in the conditional sentences of verses 14-15. If Israel, and the new king, fear, serve, and obey the Lord—if they do not rebel against God's commands—then Israel will continue to walk after the Lord (12:14). But if they do not obey the Lord, then God's hand will be against them just as it was against their fathers (12:15). God intended for the covenant relationship to continue. Not only were the people to be held accountable to its stipulations, but so also was the new king.

12:16-25. Samuel again exhorted the assembled Israelites to stand still and consider the meaning of his speech (12:16). The Lord was about to do a great thing before their eyes. Samuel called upon God to bring thunder and rain upon the earth as a divine portent of his covenant-making power. The portent was designed not only to cause awe before the people, but also as a means of punishment for the sin of asking for a king (12:17-18).

Notes:

This was no mere thunder and rain. It rarely rains in Israel during the wheat harvest. Thunder and rain at this time would have been a very unusual event. It would also have damaged the heads of the ripe grain, causing the harvest to be reduced. God had also spoken in thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:16).

The heavenly display produced a contrite confession of sin (12:19). Israel had wanted a king in order to trust in a human deliverer. Samuel consoled them, reminding them that for the sake of his great name, the Lord will not reject his people (12:22). Samuel encouraged the people to learn the way that is good and right (12:23). Israel would survive if they continued to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all their heart (12:24). Samuel's last words in the chapter offered an ominous and serious warning. Israel would still be held accountable to the covenant; but if they persisted in evil, Israel and the new king would be swept away (12:25).