

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of 1 Samuel</i>
	March 7, 2021	21

SAUL'S FEAR AND IMPATIENCE

1 SAMUEL 13:1-15

MARCH 7, 2021

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: FEAR IS THE ENEMY OF FAITHFULNESS.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WHEN WE ARE FEARFUL OR THINGS DO NOT GO OUR WAY, WE OFTEN TAKE MATTERS INTO OUR OWN HANDS INSTEAD OF WAITING ON GOD AND TRUSTING HIM.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS DID NOT LET FEAR CONTROL HIM; INSTEAD, HE FAITHFULLY WAITED ON THE LORD SO THAT WE MIGHT BE SAVED (MATT. 26:42).

INTRODUCTION

- 1 In each of the following pairs, which do you fear the most: snakes or heights, closed spaces or rejection, failure or spiders, public speaking or death?

- 2 How do you typically handle your fears (i.e. give in to them, power through, pray, etc.)?

- 3 Fear can steal our good judgment. Fear can steal our dreams. Fear can rob you of relationships. In your experience, what else can fear steal?

Notes:

Saul was anointed by God to lead Israel as king. At first, Saul was reluctant (1 Sam. 10:22), but at his first test, God's Spirit came on him and he faithfully led Israel (1 Sam. 11). However, just two chapters later in 1 Samuel 13, we quickly see an opposite response as fear got in the way of Saul's faithfulness. His fear led to impatience, and his impatience led to disobedience and disaster.

In last week's session, we learned the importance of fearing the Lord (1 Sam. 12). In this week's session, we'll see what happens when we fear people or things more than we fear the Lord.

- 4 We all know what it's like to be fearful. How can you tell when you've let your fear of people or things become greater than your fear of the Lord?

UNDERSTANDING

> READ 1 SAMUEL 13:1-7.

Notes:

- How did Saul respond to Jonathan's victory over the Philistines (vv. 3-4)?
- Why do you think Saul took credit for Jonathan's victory (v. 4)? Aside from the possibilities of wanting to rally the troops or instill confidence among the people, what other possibilities are there for Saul's response here?
- Recall Saul's behavior when being named king in 1 Samuel 10:22. Which response do you think is probably a truer reflection of who Saul was—reluctant and insecure or eager and self-confident? Why?

Saul summoned his army to meet at Gilgal—the very place where he had been crowned king of Israel. As news of the size and power of the Philistine army spread, so did Saul's grip on the Hebrew soldiers in his charge.

- Even today, world leaders typically seek to exude confidence to encourage the people. Why didn't Saul's response to the circumstances translate to a rock-steady confidence among the people?
- Compare Saul and Jonathan's forces (v. 2) with that of the Philistine forces that had gathered at Michmash (v. 5). How did this imbalance affect the men in Saul's army (vv. 6-7)?

- What does the Israelites' response to this disparity in numbers tell you about them?

Notes:

- How might Saul have led the people to fear the Lord more than they feared the Philistines in this crucial moment?

Both Saul and the Israelites were unhealthily focused on themselves. While Saul was puffed up with pride, the Israelites were petrified with self-doubt as they “hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns” (v. 6). Both Saul and the Israelites looked to themselves rather than to the Lord, who had blessed them and promised to fight for them.

- Who is someone you know who is faithful even in the face of fear? Why do you think that person responds to the circumstances of life that way?
- What is the difference between self-confidence and God-confidence? What are some steps you can take to develop the latter?

> READ 1 SAMUEL 13:8-15.

- What evidence is there in verse 8 that Saul and his men were placing their level of confidence or fear in circumstances?
- How does this help explain why God would have allowed Samuel to show up later than expected?

Samuel had told Saul to wait seven days at Gilgal, at which time he would come and give him instructions (10:8). But Saul and his troops were in trouble. The situation was so serious that Saul's troops began to desert him.

Notes:

- How did Saul respond to the news that Israelite soldiers were deserting in fear? How should Saul have responded instead?

In his fear and impatience, Saul offered the burnt offering himself—a task Samuel should have done as high priest. This might have seemed like a good idea, but it was actually a faithless violation of God's commands. Years later, King Uzziah also usurped priestly duties and received God's judgment (2 Chron. 26:16-21).

- It's clear from Saul's behavior on day eight that his faithfulness was based on an "If . . . then." If Samuel showed up in seven days, then Saul would follow the Lord's directions. Why is an attitude of "If . . . then" often a wrong response to fear?
- What would you have felt if you were in Saul's shoes? What would you have done?

Throughout Scripture, we find the importance of waiting on the Lord. Our culture of instant gratification does not value patience. Because of this, we are often tempted to take matters into our own hands when things do not go our way. This is exactly what Saul did when faced with the prospect of going to war against a fierce army, and the results of his impatience were disastrous. Saul's example teaches us that impatience is rooted in prideful self-reliance, but patiently waiting on the Lord strengthens our faith.

- Where was Saul's focus when he went ahead with giving up burnt offerings and sacrifices on his own?

Notes:

- What did Saul's fear and rash decision say about his relationship with God?
- What do pride, impatience, and disobedience say about our relationship with the Lord?

Saul's focus was not on the Lord, but on the present circumstances of his life. Instead of responding to the Israelite's desertion by patiently trusting the Lord, Saul fell prey to his own pride and offered sacrifices he was not authorized to make.

- How does Samuel's response strike you: unforgiving, unreasonable, reactionary, necessary, other?
 - Do believers today hold each other accountable to patiently wait for the Lord and demonstrate humility, or are we more apt to make excuses and "live and let live"? Why?
 - How did God respond to Saul's impatience (vv. 13-14)? What does this tell us about God?
 - Does it seem to you that God was looking for someone who was perfect and sinless? Why did this one sin effectively ruin Saul's anointing as God's leader?
 - What does God's response to Saul's impatient actions tell us about the importance of addressing and combating the impatience in our hearts?
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APPLICATION

- Is there any place in your life where God is pushing you to obey Him? Are you willing to commit yourself to faithfully say “yes”?
- What fears tend to rob you of the joy of saying “yes” to the Lord?
- How would your life look differently this week if you were to fear disobedience more than any other thing?

Notes:

PRAY

Thank God that He brings beautiful things out of desperate situations. Invite Him to show you where your fears get in the way of fullness in relationship to Him and to give you the courage to choose faithfulness.