

## How To Live For One When No One's Looking (Part 1) – 1 Sam 16

Launched a new theme for the ministry year last week, and a message series to go w/ it

Titled **Live For One** from 1 Cor 10:31

We found that we should live to glorify God and God alone in all things, at all times . . .

Not others, and certainly not ourselves

God's glory should be our ultimate goal in all we do, b/c it's his ult. goal in all *he* does

The question is, how do you do that?

To answer that question, we're going to spend the next month and a half examining

David's life, and hopefully apply the principles to ours

So our text for today is 1 Sam 16, and the issue is – **How To Live For One When No One's Looking**

As you turn there, let me give you an overview of what's ahead

I decided late Friday, to split this message into two parts

I feel like we need to spend more time on the first part than I had previously thought – I think you'll see why when we get there

Which means we're only going to cover the top of the first side of your outline today (just the story section), and then move on to the application next week

The problem is, you may need the whole sheet, front and back, for your notes today

If that's the case, go ahead, and use it – we'll give you a new one next week

That said, I want to do 2 main things in our time together

First, I want to read the story together to get the big picture and understand the situation

Then, I'm going to circle back to two issues that sometimes trip us up in our faith, found in v2 and v14, and spend the bulk of our time there

So the big picture first, and then the issues

### THE STORY

1 – God's like, Saul's out, a new king's in, get over it

2a – Samuel well knew that Saul wouldn't like having a new king chosen before he died

Especially one that wasn't from his lineage, his blood

On top of that, Gibeah, where Saul was, wasn't that far from Bethlehem (**map**), where this new king was – they were only separated by about 7 miles

And the most natural route from Ramah, where Samuel was, to Beth, where Jesse was, was thru Gibeah, where Saul was

So both the route and the proximity was a problem, and God acknowledged it . . .

2b – that kind of sounds like he's telling him to lie, doesn't it?

That's one of the issues we'll come back to

3 – the time was c1025 BC; Samuel was God's prophet, God's main mouthpiece

He was supposed to anoint a new king with oil – an act that symbolized 2 things – (1) separation to the Lord for a particular task, and (2) divine equipping for that task

This would be done again later in front of his *tribe*, Judah, and then in front of all Israel, to confirm publicly what was being done more or less privately

4 – what? why the all the fear?

Because Samuel had just executed Agag, king of the Amelikitites for their past sin . . .

So the elders of Beth. must have thought he was making the rounds of retribution for *their* past sin as well

Which was not the case (v5) . . .

5 – consecration was a ritual that included both the cleansing of their clothing/bodies, as well as the preparation of their hearts, for worship

11 – “he's out in the pasture doing the lowliest of lowly tasks”

“In fact, we didn't even invite him because he's so low on the totem pole”

12 – *ruddy*; healthy looking; a real teenage heart throb, no doubt

Samuel had to be thinking – “I hope this dude's worthy, b/c he's the last one”

13 – God gave him the power for the task ahead; The very thing that anointing symbolized

14 – what a contrast – the Spirit of the Lord *rushed* on David, and *departed* from Saul

And the following chapters serve as a great reminder, fr both David's *and* Saul's life . . .

That God's presence makes all the difference in your life, especially in leadership

14b – the Spirit of the Lord not only departed from Saul, but *an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him*

So, holy God, sent an evil spirit, to do bad things, to a sinful man

That's the second issue we'll come back to – the issue of God's providence over evil

16 – *lyre*; popular, guitar-like instrument, often used with singing

18b – even as a Shepherd in the obscurity of the fields, God's approval and blessing on David was already being recognized

19 – apparently he had gone back to pastures even after he was anointed; that's humility

That's the story, and fr it, there's much re How To Live For One When No One's Looking

But before we get to that, we need to address these two issues fr v2 and v14 . . .

So that we don't get hung up on them and miss all that God has for us in this passage

### Verse 2 – Re: Concealing the truth

2 – *Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.'*

God had just told him that the reason he wants him to go to Beth, is to anoint new king

So the question is, was God asking Samuel to *sin* by deceiving/lying to Saul?

I think the answer is no, for 2 reasons:

1. Samuel would not have been *lying*

When you lie, you state something contrary to the truth – that's not the case here

Because Samuel really was going to worship and sacrifice to the Lord

2. Samuel would not have been *deceptive*

When you deceive someone, you intentionally make them believe something that's not true – here again, that's not the case . . .

Because had Saul heard, he would have thought that Samuel was going to Bethlehem to sacrifice and worship – all of which was true

So he wasn't telling Samuel to sin, by lying or deceiving

Rather, he was telling him to *conceal* the truth, in order to protect Samuel's life, *and* the purpose for which he was sending him

To which you might say – “Fair enough, but is that okay for us to do?”

Is that acceptable behavior based on this example?

To conceal the truth whenever we want? To tell *half-truths*?

Sure . . . if you're dealing with a wicked dictator, you're life is in jeopardy, your mission is at risk, and God tells you to  
If those 4 things are true, I would concede that you have grounds to conceal the truth, based on this example  
Short of that, the consistent teaching of Scripture is to live openly and speak the truth – the *whole* truth

The second issue from v14, is regarding . . .

**Verse 14 – Re: The Providence of God over evil**

*An evil spirit from the Lord tormented him* – on the surface, that doesn't quite feel right  
I think that's because it doesn't quite fit our preconceived notions about God  
At least the God we put in our own little box, with a nice, tidy bow

I want to give you 6 principles to help you understand what is, and is not going on here

**1. Scripture is clear that on occasion, God not only allows evil, but ordains it**

That is, he indirectly brings it about; He ensures that it will happen  
He doesn't do it, or carry it out, but he decides that it will happen

There are literally dozens of Scriptures that say so, like . . .

Ex 4:21 where God tells Moses to go do his miracles before Pharaoh, and then says –  
*But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.*

God hardened Pharaoh's heart – he ordained that rebellion would mark his life  
Rom 9:18 where, after talking about Jacob and Esau, and Moses and Pharaoh, Paul says  
of God – *He has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills*

Ex 14:17 where God hardened the hearts of the Egyptians to pursue the Israelites  
with their chariots . . .

A principle repeated in Ps 105:25 – *He [God] turned their hearts to hate his people*

The list continues with the Canaanites in Josh 11:20 – *It was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts*

And with David later on, when God told him – *I will raise up evil against you out of your own house* (2 Sam 12:11)

And then incited him to sin in 2 Sam 24:1, by taking a census

On occasion, Scripture is clear that God not only allows evil, but sometimes ordains it  
That is, he indirectly brings it about to accomplish his purposes

Like when he raised up evil kings against Solomon in 1 Kings 11 (v14,23)  
Or brought the wicked Babylonians against his people to punish them in Jer 25 (v8-9)  
Or intentionally deceives certain false prophets in Ez 14 (v6-11), to further lead his people astray/punish them  
Or when he put a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets (1 Kings 22:23)

Then there's Lam 3:38 where it says – *Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?*

And Is 63:17 where God's people asked – *O Lord, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not?*

And how about 1 Pet 2:8 where Peter says that those who reject Jesus as the Messiah,  
*stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do*  
And 2 Thess 2:11-12 where it says of those who refuse to love the truth and be saved –

*Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false*  
Sometimes God deludes/deceives those who already reject the truth and his offer of salvation, in order to seal their fate and the punishment they deserve

And finally, the clearest example of all that God sometimes ordains evil, is the death of his own Son

In **Acts 4:26-28** a prayer of the early believers is recorded – *The rulers were gathered against the Lord and against his Anointed – for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*

They were confessing that God determined beforehand, ordained – that all of those people would bring about the suffering and death of Jesus – about as evil as it gets

That's the first thing I want you to see and understand

That on occasion, Scripture is clear that God not only allows evil, but ordains it  
That is, he indirectly brings it about to accomplish his purposes

**2. When a person or spirit acts on God's behalf to do the evil he ordains, they do so of their own choosing** (their own will, desire)

God sometimes ordains evil, but he never makes someone do something evil that they don't want to do; There's no coercion involved

He only uses willing agents who *want* to do the very thing he ordains – that's the implication of each and every example

*How* he does so, *how* he causes free agents such as people or spirits, to make willing choices, we're not told – we're just told that he does

**3. God is never considered guilty of wrongdoing for the evil he ordains**

He's never blamed for it (at least not legitimately)

He's never held responsible for it in a moral sense

Only those who carry it out are held responsible/accountable for it

Again, because they're free, willing agents, doing what they want to do, and therefore deserving to be punished for their sin

This is important, b/c if God were culpable or blameworthy, then he would have done something wrong, and wouldn't be God

**4. Apart from the explicit indication in Scripture, we cannot know whether an act of evil is allowed or ordained**

We can't know; If I had to guess based on Scripture and the experience of my own life, I'd say the vast majority is allowed, given the fallen world we live in  
But when it comes to individual situations in our lives, we must be very careful *not* to jump to conclusions about whether the evil was allowed or ordained  
Because it's a guess at best, and a foolish presumption on the mind of God, at worst

This is particularly appropriate on the recent anniversary of 9/11 this past week  
We don't know whether it was God-allowed or God-ordained – to say one way or the other is foolish speculation that does no good  
And we don't have to know

Because when you get right down to it, our response s/b the same – fight and flee  
Fight for what's right, and flee what's wrong

## 5. God uses all things, good and bad, for his glory, his purposes, and our good

That's why Joseph, who eventually became Pharaoh's right hand man and accomplished much good in that position . . .

Was able to say to his brothers who had sold him into slavery – *As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.* (Gen 50:20)

That's why Paul was able to say in Rom 8:28 – *We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

He works all things together for good, for those who love him and are called according to his purpose – which you are if he's Lord of your life

Now, if all of that puts your mind in knots, you're in good company

And if you think you have it all figured out, you don't understand; Because . . .

## 6. God does not fully reconcile all of this in his Word

He does not fully reconcile the fact that in his goodness and holiness, he sometimes ordains bad things

He does not fully reconcile the fact that he sometimes ordains bad things through the actions of free agents, and yet holds them responsible for it, while he is not

But we have more than enough to know that he is *good* beyond a shadow of a doubt

That we can *trust* his plan/purpose in all things

And no matter what the source of evil, whether ordained/allowed, he's *always* in control

- Having said all that, let's go back to 1 Sam 16:14 and the *evil spirit from the Lord* that tormented Saul  
Obviously this is a case where God ordained the evil that would befall him, by sending an evil spirit, presumably a messenger of Satan . . .  
To aggravate him, and quite possibly exacerbate a predisposition on his part for depression, anger, and delusion

But the main thing to see is that God used something bad, to accomplish something good

He used an evil spirit (something bad), to expose David to the king's court (something good), and give him an insider's look into running the nation that he would eventually lead – it's genius

Did I mention that God uses all things for his purposes and our good?

I might note that some people will try to say that this is somehow a spirit of discontent in Saul, rather than an *evil* spirit . . .

But there's nothing in the text to warrant such a conclusion

Usually, those who advocate such things are just trying to avoid the uncomfortable conclusion that God sometimes ordains evil . . .

Because it doesn't fit their preconceived theology, or their notions of God

So they either dismiss it all together, or try to explain it away

- Now, at this point, you might ask – Do I have to worry about God sending an evil spirit to torment *me*? To oppress me?  
For most of you, the answer is no

But if you're making shipwreck of your faith by rejecting the truth, or indulging in sin . . .

Then yes, you have reason to worry about God's discipline, whatever form it takes

Especially if you're like Hymenaeus/Alexander, 2 men in Timothy's church, who were making shipwreck of their faith *and* the faith of others, by teaching false doctrine

Of them, the apostle Paul says in 1 Tim 1:20 that he *handed them over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme*

Or, if you're like the man in Corinth who was indulging in the heinous sin of having sex with his father's wife (i.e. his mom or his step mom) . . .

Then you have cause to worry about God's discipline to get you to stop

Because Paul tells the rest of the church in 1 Cor 5, *to deliver him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh* . . .

With the hope of course, that he would come to his senses, repent of his sin, and be saved

IOW, through the rejection of his people in extreme cases of sin or rebellion, God may expose you to Satan's influence

And if he does, he does so to discipline you, wake you up, or destroy you – it's possible

Whether that includes or involves the oppression of an evil spirit, I don't know

But whatever it means, it can't be good, and you have reason for concern

But short of that, short of rejecting Jesus or indulging in sin – you have nothing to worry about, and much to look forward to

And you can rest secure in the fact that God is altogether good, altogether trustworthy, and always in control – even when it comes to evil

Next week we'll explore the application

But for now, I think that's more than enough to chew on