



1 Samuel

Following The Shepherd King In An Age Of Personal Freedom

Life Group Discussion / Week Five

OVERVIEW

As we've seen in previous discussions, the people had demanded a king, and the Lord had agreed to their demands. The young man the Lord would select for the job was named Saul. He was strong and tall, standing head and shoulders above his peers. He was from a wealthy and influential Benjamite family and was probably among the better-educated class in his land. His family had many servants, so he was familiar with being in a position of authority.

From the world's perspective, Saul had the perfect background and ideal qualifications for a king. But the world's perspective is not God's perspective. Saul may have appeared kingly on the outside, but as we will see in a future discussion, his heart was not turned toward the Lord, which was the primary qualification for Israel's king. His life would ultimately demonstrate a failing common in politics and leadership even today: doing what is expedient while always looking out for one's own interests. However, at the beginning of Saul's story he seemed to be a young man of great promise.

Chapters 9–10 comprise a long, winding road leading to Saul's anointing and public announcement as king. The details are at times confusing, but the primary point is God's sovereign orchestration. We don't always see God's intrusions in our daily lives but we are assured he is working.

READ

1 Samuel 9:1-21

STUDY & APPLY

1. Our first introduction to Saul emphasizes his appearance. Even Samuel finds Saul's appearance impressive. **What are some of the traits we see in Saul from this early picture of his life and why do you think these traits are emphasized? How do these differ from God's standards of what made a good king?**
2. "*Providence*" is a word that means the way that God provides for the needs of his people. It is the wonderful, strange, mysterious, and unguessable way God has of ruling his world and sustaining his people. And, he exercises his providence, frequently, through the most common stuff of our lives or even in spite of our own will. What appears to be by chance is very much under God's direction. Each step along the way could be viewed as simple coincidence, but there are no coincidences in God's eyes. **What are some of the ordinary events mentioned which brought Saul to the little city? What does this tell us about the way God works in our lives?**

3. God's secret ways are not to be misunderstood as his lack of care. We tend to think that God is not working if we can't see exactly how he is working. God is working out his promises even when it looks like he is nowhere around. It's common to look at major events in our lives and say "God was there" while neglecting to believe in God's work in the ordinary things of life. You may see traces of what he has been doing much later as you look back, but in the present you may be just as much in the dark as Saul was. **How does this passage help you become more aware of God's providence and work in the ordinary things of your life?**

4. What we know of God's people up to this point is that they are foolish, forgetful, stubborn, and disobedient! In terms of spiritual accomplishment, they are failures. To some degree we all buy into the lie that we are important based on appearance and accomplishments. The message of the Bible is not that God blesses those who live morally and good lives. The message of the Bible is that God continually and relentlessly gives his grace to people who don't deserve it. There is much meaning in the simple expression in verse 16, "*Their cry has come up to me.*" **What does this expression show us about God's concern for our suffering? What does it teach us about what is required of us?**

Closing Reflection:

Our crying out to God for help is a foretaste of the cross of Jesus. How so? At the beginning of the story of Samuel, Hannah speaks of a future king. Despite Israel's sinful demand for a king, Saul is, for a time, a king used of God to unite God's people and defeat their enemies. But, it becomes increasingly clear that Saul is not the long-awaited king. Here in 1 Samuel 9, the people cried out for help and God responded. And how he ultimately responded is the most beautiful thing you'll ever see. In the world, a good king may help if the people cry out. On the cross it was the King who cried out on our behalf so that we could be saved. So that now as we cry out for help, we can be heard. The world's values requires it's people to cry out to their king for help. Jesus is a king like no other. He is the only King willing to cry out on behalf of his people. That is why Jesus' perfect, eternal, unchanging, unthreatened kingdom is so utterly unique and important.

PRAY

Close your discussion praying earnestly, empathetically, and boldly for one another.