



1 Samuel

Following The Shepherd King In An Age Of Personal Freedom

Life Group Discussion / Week Four

OVERVIEW

In the previous study, we saw in Chapter 7 how Samuel helped lead God's people to repent from their sins and back to God in obedience and service to him with their whole lives. As time passed they enjoyed years of prosperity and triumph over their enemies. About 30 years have passed between 1 Samuel chapter 7 and the beginning of chapter 8. Samuel literally devoted his entire life to serving Israel, and that service was not always easy. At this point, one might expect that he would be treated with respect and honor. But that was not the case. The people of Israel had focused their eyes on their influential neighbors and they were beginning to imitate men rather than God.

Finally, the elders of Israel decided to come to Samuel and demand he replace himself with a king. The Lord, of course, was not caught off guard by this demand. Even though he knows it will only bring servitude to the people, he permits their demands. Sometimes, it isn't good to get our heart's desires.

1 Samuel 8 is our mirror; it reveals Israel and us. How easily we misplace our trust; how ashamed we are to be different; how resistant we are to any word that does not agree with our opinion.

This study reveals us. Generally, we would like to avoid such a painful personal analysis. But, if we take the more painful way of listening to God's correction, we will better enjoy his comfort and promise that soon follow. As we look at God's analysis of his people...let's monitor our own hearts to see if we fall in the same kind of error.

READ

1 Samuel 8:1-22

STUDY & APPLY

1. Samuel was disappointed, at least in part, because he felt the people were rejecting him. He had spent his life serving God's people, first as a boy in the temple and then later as the nation's judge and the Lord's prophet. He may also have sensed the greater danger behind the request for a king: the people wanted a human leader they could see rather than the Lord whom they could not see. **How did Samuel respond to the elders' request for a king? How does his response compare with your own response in situations where you are discouraged or disappointed with the way things are going?**

Desire itself is not wrong. Desire is part of being human. A sinful desire could be a desire for a good thing that has become more important to us than God. Our problem is certain desires which struggle against God's control. The world is full of good things given by God. We can, and should, enjoy them. God promises to meet our true needs, but we can't expect him to satisfy our selfish desires. God isn't the key to the good life (however we choose to define it). He defines what is the good life. He is the good life. God must be desired for his own sake, not as a purveyor of worldly success.

2. Samuel's warning about the kind of king they demand (vv. 10–18) repeats a key word six times. **What is this word, and what is its significance here? Why do you think God granted their demand even though He knew it would bring suffering to them?**

3. God's plan was for Him to be His people's King and for them to trust Him fully for their needs and safety. But the people of Israel were perpetually lured away from God's plan by the ways of the world. Christians, and the church today, face this same danger. It is easier for us, according to our human mindset, to trust our future to human beings whom we can see, but this demonstrates a lack of trust in the faithfulness and power of God. **Why did the Israelites want to imitate their neighbors, even after seeing what pain it would bring?**

4. God's ways may not seem as easy or attractive as the world's ways, but they are always good and right. To reject God's ways is a rejection of our very identity and calling as his people. And, striving to obey God's Word and wisdom is a sign of genuine faith in God. Israel hears God's wisdom but does not submit to it; God gives her instruction but she is not teachable. As we look at this it should lead us to cry out for a soft heart, for a teachable spirit, and for preservation from the arrogance of our own stupidity. As a follow-up to the previous question, refer to the table below: **Who or what do you tend to imitate in the world? In what areas do you experience temptation to avoid being different and set-apart? What would it look like for you, this week, to imitate Christ more closely?**

	OUR CALLING AND IDENTITY	THE WORLD'S VALUES
When making decisions	<i>What does God say?</i>	<i>What do people around me say?</i>
Our posture and demeanor	<i>Different, distinct, holy</i>	<i>Blend in, fit it, be like others</i>
Our purpose and mission	<i>A light to the nations, revealing the goodness of God</i>	<i>Conforming to the dominant values of the culture</i>
Solutions to our problems past, present, and future	<i>Trusting in God's promises</i>	<i>Reacting to circumstances, trusting in our own wisdom, or conventional wisdom of the day</i>

PRAY

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