



# 1 Samuel

*Following The Shepherd King In An Age Of Personal Freedom*

## Life Group Discussion / Week Three

### OVERVIEW

In 1 Samuel chapter 4, the Israelites go out to fight against the Philistines, their main threat at this point in history. The story does not start well. Israel will learn quickly how the presence of God cannot be taken lightly. They go into battle without God...and lose. This confuses them. They ask, “*Why did the Lord bring defeat on us today before the Philistines?*”. Their response is to bring the ark of the Lord’s covenant to the next battle.

*The ark of the covenant was that sacred, gold-covered, portable box about 4 feet long and 2 feet wide and high that contained the stone tablets with the 10 commandments, among other items to remind God’s people of the covenant relationship they shared. It was a symbol of God’s presence among his people. It pointed to God’s ruling, his leadership, and his salvation for his people. Two golden Cherubim were attached to the lid, where the glory of God was present.*

Things go from bad to worse as Israel is defeated again, this time 30,000 men are killed. To make their defeat worse, the ark is captured and taken into enemy territory. Everywhere the ark goes, God’s heavy hand weighs down hard on the people. It’s not hard to end up seeing through this story that the presence of God is no trifling matter. He is no one’s good-luck charm, trophy, or novelty.

The Israelites find themselves in a horrible dilemma. God is more holy than they imagined and they are more sinful than they believed. They wonder, “Who is able to stand in the presence of God?” Our study leads us to learn how sinful people can be heard and helped by a glorious God.

### READ

1 Samuel 4:1-22

### STUDY & APPLY

1. It is suggested that when the elders call for the ark to go before them in battle, they are trusting in the ark as something like a good-luck charm. Read 1 Samuel 4:3 carefully, again. What were the Israelites’ motives when they brought the ark into battle with them? In what ways do people tend to treat God in this same way today?

*It's not hard to end up seeing God in an un-weighty way; to think perhaps unconsciously, that if we engage in certain spiritual activities from time to time then we are doing our fair share for God. And, in return we expect God to save us from hell and help out from time to time in life, ensuring that we are comfortable or happy or whatever it is that we wish to use him to supply. But God is not there for us. We are here for him. We are made in his image, we are not to make him in ours. The world does not revolve around us. God is at the center. God's glory must be center. His opinion matters more than anything. We need to take God seriously.*

2. Is there an aspect of God's Word you tend to ignore? What area of obedience might He be calling you toward in the coming week?

*In light of God's weightiness and our sinfulness, the people of God pose this important question: "Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God?" (1 Samuel 6:20). The ark of God's presence weighs heavy in judgment on both God's people and God's enemies. They are basically asking, "How can anyone be safe in the presence of God?" Samuel leads God's people to the answer to this important question. **Read 1 Samuel 7:1-13 and answer the next question.***

3. Repentance is not just a certain feeling of regret about sin, or even turning from sin. What does true repentance look like? Discuss several features derived from the passage.

*The animal sacrifice was a picture that if anyone desires to stand before God and live, a suitable sacrifice is necessary. An animal which was sacrificed was meant to take upon the sins of the people and "atone", or make payment for their sins. Sacrifice is a pointer to the cross of Jesus. **Read Romans 5:1-11 and answer the final question.***

4. God takes his glory so seriously that he himself takes the weight of glory on himself. The weight of his glory pressed down on Jesus and crushed him until he was dead. He died in our place. How is the grace of God in the sacrifice of Jesus the answer to the question, "Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God?" On what basis and by what means do we stand in peace with God now?

## **PRAY**

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