

1 Samuel 12 Bible Study

Church Weekend Away ...

For Starters

- Finish the sentence: "An underestimated quality in a good leader is ..."

Read 1 Samuel 12:1-5

- What sort of leader is/was Samuel?

Read 1 Samuel 12:6-13

- What sort of leader was God?
- So why did Israel reject both Samuel, and more importantly God?

Read 1 Samuel 12:14-19

- What is the point of the 'sign' (v17-18) and what good does it bring about?
- What was so wrong about requesting a King? V19, (8:7-8, 10:19)

Read 1 Samuel 12:20-25

- How should we as God's people respond when we realise we've been replacing God in our life with other things? What helps motivate this response?

Apply

- List some things we're often tempted to replace God with in our lives.
- Do they deliver what they promise at any level? (be honest).
- In what sense are they empty & not able to deliver, compared with God?
- What are at least 5 great things God has done for you?
- If you were to '*serve the Lord with all your heart*' (v20, v24) this week, what's one difference it would make ...
 - o At Home
 - o At Church
 - o At Work
 - o At School/Uni
 - o Socially

Church Weekend Away ...

1 Samuel 13 Bible Study

Church Weekend Away ...

For Starters

- Can you think of an instance where a decision you made or an action you took seemed wise at the time but was actually foolish?

★ A bit of context: After Saul's first victory in Ch11, Samuel instructed Israel to go to Gilgal to 'renew the Kingdom' (11:14). This involved recognising their sin in rejecting and replacing God as King and turning back to him in repentance and obedience. Samuel says to them, *"If you fear the Lord and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God—good! 15 But if you do not obey the Lord, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your ancestors"* (12:14-15). Israel and King Saul are given a fresh chance to follow and obey the Lord. Let's see how it goes ...

Read 13:1-4

- What does Saul do wrong here?

Read 13:5-14

- Read 1 Samuel 10:8 for some background context ...
- What is your gut reaction to this episode?
- Put yourself in Saul's position. What would you have done?
- What is the key reason Saul is disqualified? (v13-14) How do you react to Samuel's rebuke?
- Is it right that God's standards for the King are so inflexibly high? Why/why not?
- What Kind of King was God looking for and why?
 - o Dt 17:18-20
 - o Acts 13:21-23.
- According to the following scriptures, how does Jesus fulfill God's requirement for a King and how do we benefit as his people?

- Romans 5:18-19
 - Hebrews 5:7-9
 - Hebrews 4:15-16
- How is Jesus' act of obedience (his whole life climaxing in going to the cross) foolish from the worlds point of view (Mk15:25-32), and yet wise from God's point of view (1Cor1:18-25)?

Reflect

- Trusting and obeying God can sometimes look foolish from the worlds point of view. Can you think of any examples? What would you say to a friend who accused you of being foolish in this regard?
- Are there times when it feels like the commands of God are best put to one side? When?
- Spend some time praising God that his acceptance of us is not on the basis of our own obedience but the obedience of another. (2Cor5:21, 1Cor1:30-31).

1 Samuel 14:1-23 Bible Study

Church weekend away ...

For starters

- If we define 'enemy' as 'anything that attacks your wellbeing', then what do you think the average person living on the North Shore of Sydney considers to be their worst enemy? What sort of 'enemies' plague us and what sort of 'saviours' do we look for to help?

★ CONTEXT: The Philistines are set to attack (13:17-18). The day of the battle (13:22) arrives, and only 2 Israelites possess weapons (Saul & Jonathan 13:22-23). Israel's situation is tragic and even laughable. Saul's leadership is compromised (13:13-14), and his kingship disqualified. So, who will fight this brewing battle for Israel?

Read 14:1-7

- How would you describe Jonathan's faith? Contrast what you know of Saul's (from Chapter 13).
- Is Jonathan operating on a 'name it and claim it' understanding of faith? Can we name a desired victory in our life and trust God to bring it about? Why/why not?
- When do you find it difficult to act on your faith? When do you find it easier?

Read 14:8-23

- Who is involved in the salvation of Israel?
- How does Jonathan show us a glimpse of Jesus?

★ As the story line of scripture unfolds, we realise that the true enemies of God's people are not foreign armies but Sin, Satan, and Death. And so, Jesus doesn't come to fight a military style battle for that wouldn't be dealing with the core issue. In John 18:11 Jesus commanded Peter, *"Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"* and later in John 18:36 Jesus said, *"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."* Jesus fights our enemies by dying and rising again for us. In doing so he neutralises our deepest enemies (evil, Satan, death, judgment). Thus, this 'gospel' of Jesus is peoples greatest need and saves them from their deadliest enemies.

Reflect

- In Romans 1:16 we read, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile"*. (See also 1 Cor1:18)

- How is God's powerful salvation encountered/experienced today?

- How would you use the truth of Romans 1:16 to encourage the following people:
 - o ... Ken, who doesn't want to invite his friends to church because he thinks they won't find it compelling.

 - o ... Barbie, who struggles with her sense of spiritual inadequacy and so leaves sharing the gospel to 'the gifted'.

- While Jonathan's actions point us firstly to Jesus, his active faith is inspiring! Notice how he moves from knowing something about God to action (v6). How does his example prompt you to attempt brave things for God? What are you being called to do? What attitudes or actions could you work on because of what you know about God? Finish the sentence: *"Because God is I can ..."*

[i.e., "Because God is X (insert attribute) ... I can/should Y (insert attitude/action)."]

1 Samuel 14:24-35 Bible Study

For Starters

- Can you think of an example where you strongly disagreed with a leader's decision/direction How did you express it? Who was right?

Read 14:24

- In v24 we get a flashback regarding something Saul did during the battle just described. If you were a fighting soldier and he said that to you, what would you privately think?
- Why do you think Saul made this oath?

Read 14:25-29

- What does Jonathan think of his Father's oath?

★ **Read 14:30-45.** Here is a summary of v30-45... The rest of Ch14 doesn't paint Saul in the positive. Firstly, we see the effects of his dumb oath on the soldiers. They are so starved that they break God's law by eating uncooked meat (Lev17:11, 7:26-27, Gen9:4). Saul then intervenes like a priest in order to rectify the situation, but his sudden interest in God seems out of place (v34-35). Especially because he immediately plans an attack without God in mind (v36). It takes the priest to remind him about inquiring of God. He seems to treat God as an afterthought for security (v37). When God doesn't answer him, he assumes it is because someone has broken his abstaining from food oath (v24)! He presses Israel to ascertain who broke the oath and swears another silly oath (to kill even his son if he is found guilty! v38-39). In v40-44 Saul discovers that it was Jonathan and announces his fate. BUT the people vindicate Jonathan by siding with him (and God) over Saul! (v45). Why would you kill the saviour God used to deliver his people?

- Saul seems to turn to God as a last-minute option to avert a crisis. Have you ever done that? What does this assume about God? What does this reveal about you?
- Why isn't Jonathan God's choice of King? He's so good!

★ Jonathan gives us a glimpse of the Kingship needed, but tragically he himself will never become the saviour King Israel were promised because judgment has already fallen on Saul's throne and his dynasty will not continue (13:13-14). We must wait for God to find the man after his own heart (13:14).

Read 14:47-48 & 52

- How can Saul be portrayed so positively here? Isn't he the untrustworthy King whom God rejected?

- "Competency trumps Character" Assess.

- What does this (v47-52) teach us about how to evaluate success (whether riches, fame, influence, church growth, military victory, organisational efficiency, charismatic personality etc...)?

1 Samuel 15 Bible Study

For Starters

- "Christianity is about relationship not religion" Agree?

Read 15:1-35

- What are your initial impressions?

★ This passage raises the thorny issue of Old Testament violence, and in particular God's command for Israel to destroy a foreign nation. Basically, God commands Saul to wipe out all the Amalekites and he doesn't complete the job. This is seen as an act of disobedience which confirms his disqualification as King. You'll find an appendix for those with questions about this kind of Old Testament violence. My suggestion is not to focus on that issue in this particular study but rather try to focus on the theme of obedience. In Ch13 we saw the need for God's representative King to hear and obey his word perfectly. This is now repeated in Ch15. We saw how ultimately it is Jesus who carries this mantle of obedience for us. But this doesn't mean there are no implications for our obedience ... as we'll now explore.

- "To obey is better than sacrifice" (v22). What does this mean? Put it in the vernacular.
- What Christian/religious activities might we be tempted to think substitute for obedience to God's word?
- How can we ensure our Christian actions arise out of a real relational engagement with God? What helps you?

★ To obey is to follow the will of another instead of our own. And God's will is good and liberating. We are tempted not to think so! In our folly and arrogance, we think we know better. However, if God's will is perfectly good and liberating, the best thing for us as humans is to trust him and obey him. As one Hymn put it 'Trust and obey, for there is no other way, to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey'. Feel free to sing that last sentence.

Now, we've previously explored how Adam & Eve didn't trust and obey, and we are just like them. And we've seen the wonder of Jesus doing what we failed to (live perfectly under God's rule) and blessing us with the results (Forgiveness, Adoption, an eternal inheritance) Our obedience doesn't qualify us for this great salvation. His obedience did! Rather our obedience is a grateful response to this salvation enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus gives us his spirit and slowly remoulds us into his image (2Cor3:17-18), helping us to yield our will to the Father. In doing so, the image of God we once had at creation but was

shattered by sin (but not lost), is slowly remade in us. As we learn to trust and obey we slowly become more like the obedient Son, Jesus. Obedience becomes an expression of love flowing out of our union with Christ (Jn14:23, Jn15:4, 9-11). And when we fail & fall, God has given us all the resources in Jesus for us to get back up and keep going (1Jn1:9). Sin will be with us until the end, when Jesus will return and complete his transformation project. We will be like him in mind, body, and spirit (Phil3:20-21). Finally we will be perfectly obedient children absolutely delighting in God's will, for we will see clearly and know in our bones how good and liberating him and his ways are.

- Describe the various ways Saul denies his guilt (v15, v20-21, v24, v30)

Apply

- Do you see Saul's excuses for his disobedience in your own life? How?
- What is the difference between a wise and foolish person according to Jesus? (See Matthew 7:24-27. And recall 1 Samuel 13:13).
- Share a few areas (if you're comfortable) where you know you need to work at trusting and going God's way instead of your own.
- Can you think of examples where it is hard to trust and obey God (perhaps even considered naïve) due to complex and difficult life circumstances?
- Comfort & enthuse each other with the promise of the gospel (See Heb10:19-23)

Pray together.

PLEASE NOTE: The next bible study in this series will be a relatively freeform sharing and praying night. It might be worth sharing reflections from the Church weekend away. For those who don't attend, perhaps they could share something they've been learning or wrestling with from God's word recently. Share prayer points and spend time praying. Pray for our Church and the vision the risen Lord Jesus has given us of growing disciples through outreach, belonging and maturing.