



Lethbridge  
First Baptist  
Church

# Who is Your King?

A Devotional Guide through 1 Samuel

August 2026

This daily devotional guide is meant to help you explore the Scriptures in our sermon series on 1 Samuel. Each week, we will explore the passage that will be preached on the upcoming Sunday (for example, we are reading 1 Sam 1–2 from Jun 29—July 5; this passage will be preached on in the July 5 Sunday service).

Each day, a portion of the passage is provided to you to read or listen to. You may do this individually or with your household. Feel free to do this in whatever version you find most helpful. A key verse from each portion will be given. The default Bible version used in this devotional guide is the New International Version (NIV). If a different version is used, it will be indicated. If you're feeling extra ambitious, you might consider spending an additional 5–10 minutes meditating on this key verse, or maybe even memorize one of the key verses of the week.

A short devotional is provided for you with questions to consider for application, prayer, or discussion. Finally, a short prayer may be provided in italics. These prayers are meant to assist you in finding words for your personal prayers with God.

It is our prayer that these daily devotionals will help your walk with God so that you may encounter him daily and grow in faith and love.

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Saturday, August 1

**Read or listen to Ps 47:1–9.**

Key verse: God is the king of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. (Ps 47:7)

The beginning of Saul's reign is a mixed bag of emotions. On one hand, there is excitement for a hopeful future—there is a king who will be God's partner for justice on behalf of Israel! But on the other, this king shows concerning character deficiencies—he hides when he is called upon as Israel's new king.

The book of Samuel responds to Israel's need for a good and just ruler. Israel rejected God as their king; they desire a human ruler whom they can see and talk to. Their desire for a human ruler will come at a cost, and the rest of Scripture will explore how humans are insufficient to be their own rulers. They will fail every single time.

There is a need for a king, but the true and rightful king is not a human one. On this side of the cross, we know that it is Jesus, God in Human Flesh, who walked on the earth and was crowned on the throne of the cross.

What does it mean to you that Jesus is the King whom we (all of humanity) have been waiting for? Write, sing, walk, dance, or otherwise express a prayer to him.

Sunday, August 2

**If you have the time, read or listen to 1 Sam 9–11.**

So far, Saul has been an alright king; sure, he hid from the people when they wanted to anoint him, but then he acted to deliver Jabesh Gilead from an imminent threat. His fear and hesitance have been balanced by his zeal for justice, but there is a note of caution in the story—this is, after all, the king that the people asked for.

What have you learned about God’s character in these chapters of 1 Samuel? What do you think of Saul? Is there a word of caution or encouragement in Saul’s story for you?

*Lord,  
Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth.  
Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust.  
Let peace fill our hearts, our world and our universe.  
Let us dream together, pray together and work together,  
To build one world of peace and justice for all.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Author unknown

**Sunday Sermon Notes**

Monday, August 3

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 12:1–5.**

Key verse: “The Lord and his anointed one are my witnesses today,” Samuel declared, “that my hands are clean.” (1 Sam 12:5, NLT)

The passage for this week is Samuel’s farewell speech to Israel. It is the passing of the torch from his leadership to Saul’s. Samuel appeals to God and Saul as witnesses to the end of his leadership: he has treated the people of Israel fairly according to their wishes and his hands are clean from any wrongdoing.

It is difficult to say goodbye to a good leader. However, all leadership cycles eventually end, and the passing of the torch is inevitable—in work, ministry, and even in family roles. While the end of a leader’s service can be difficult, it can also be a time of celebration—to celebrate all the good that they did and to anticipate how God will move in new ways. We have experienced a lot of change at First B in the past two years, and we have experienced the full range of emotions through it!

Consider your life: Where have you been a leader? To whom have you passed on the torch? Who passed on their leadership to you? Talk to God about these things.

Tuesday, August 4

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 12:6–11.**

Key verse: “They cried out to the Lord... and he delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around you.” (1 Sam 12:10–11)

As with all passing-of-the-torch ceremonies in Scripture, Moses briefly reviews Israel’s history from their time in Egypt to their settling in the land of Canaan. Three things are emphasized here:

1. God heard Israel’s cries for help when they were slaves in Egypt and sent Moses and Aaron to deliver them.
2. Israel abandoned the Lord their God, breaking the terms of their covenant with him, so he gave them over to their enemies who oppressed them.
3. God heard their cries for help (again!) and sent the judges to deliver them.

Do you see the pattern here? God delivers, Israel is unfaithful, they cry out for help, and God delivers them again. Despite Israel’s unfaithfulness, God does not give up on them. The minute that they need his help and repent, he rescues them. Is this cycle encouraging or discouraging to you? Talk to God honestly about it.

*The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.* (Lam 3:22-23, NLT)

Wednesday, August 5

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 12:12–15.**

Key verse: “Now if you fear and worship the Lord and listen to his voice, and if you do not rebel against the Lord’s commands, then both you and your king will show that you recognize the Lord as your God.” (1 Sam 12:14, NLT)

Nahash’s move against Israel spurred on Israel’s desire for a human king to rescue them, “even though the Lord your God was your king” (1 Sam 12:12). Despite this new leadership model, Samuel encourages Israel to not lose sight of God. They and their king were to fear *God* more than the influence of the other nations.

The fear of the Lord is closely tied to worship and obedience. We are often uncomfortable with this concept; we prefer the image of a comfortable, loving God. God *is* loving, but he is also *God*, meaning that he is the Creator who holds our universe together and has breathed life into existence. We, on the other hand, are *not God*. We are created beings. The right response, according to the Scriptures, is worship and obedience.

How do you feel about the fear of the Lord? How do you feel about worshipping him and obeying him? Spend some time talking to God about it today.

Thursday, August 6

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 12:16–19.**

Key verse: “Stand still and see this great thing the Lord is about to do before your eyes!” (1 Sam 12:16)

God isn’t quite ready to let Israel off the hook for asking for a king. God sends supernatural rain during the dry season—a sign of God’s approval of Samuel and disapproval of Israel’s request for a king. Ouch.

In our individualistic, secular world, we are taught that our actions don’t impact anyone but ourselves. We can be our own kings and gods; in fact, this might be the only way to be popular, to climb the social ladder and gain a name for ourselves, to finally buy that house, or to set up a legacy.

However, our actions are never truly isolated from others. What we do impacts the people in our lives. The things we pursue at all costs can drive a wedge between us and our loved ones. The things that we think will bring us happiness only drain our bank accounts and cause stress.

Sometimes, God speaks to us dramatically with thunder and rain (metaphorically or literally) to get our attention. Other times, we need to “stand still” and pay attention to hear him. Is God trying to get your attention today? What is he saying?

*God, speak and I will listen. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Amen.*

Friday, August 7

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 12:20–24.**

Key verse: “For the sake of his great name the Lord will not reject his people.” (1 Sam 12:22)

Theologian Christopher Wright says, “God’s mission for Israel was simply that they should *live* as the people of Yahweh in the midst of the nations, bearing his name in their worship, prayer, and daily lives. And for that purpose, they must *walk* in the way of the Lord. And that was why God had chosen them in the first place, in Abraham, so that through them he could ultimately bring redemptive blessing to all nations.”<sup>2</sup>

The story of the Bible is one long vision for God’s people to *live* as his people, *walk* with him, and bring God’s blessing to all nations. God reminds his people of this grand narrative: he does not and will not give up on them because he has called them to *live*, *walk*, and *be* his blessing to the world.

And yet, this is a call and response—God’s people must follow him, obey him, and worship him alone in order to experience his blessing. How is God inviting you to respond to him today?

*Lord God, point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. (Ps 139:24, NLT)*

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<sup>2</sup> Carmen Joy Imes, *Bearing God’s Name*, xii.

Saturday, August 8

**Read or listen to Ps 106:1–48.**

Key verse: “Yet he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; for their sake he remembered his covenant.” (Ps 106:44–45)

God remembers his covenant. No, he had not forgotten it, like how we forget our keys. Instead, God recalls the entire story of his people—the good, the bad, and the ugly. The covenant is the promise made between God and his people: in exchange for his protection and provision, they would obey and serve him alone as their God. We explored the pattern of God rescues-Israel forgets-God rescues a few days ago. While Israel repeatedly forgets and abandons their relationship with God, God never does the same. Every single time Israel returns to him, he hears their cries and delivers them.

God does not forget you or your people. Even when you have forgotten him, he doesn’t forget you. This is not meant to guilt-trip you, but to encourage you that yes, you are a fallible, broken human being, but the God who created you does not and will never give up on you.

What does it mean to you that God loves you *that* much, that he won’t abandon you? Can you really, truly believe it? Talk to him about it.

Sunday, August 9

**If you have the time, read or listen to 1 Sam 12.**

This passage is a reminder to Israel of the covenant that they had made with God: God heard their cries and delivered them, and now they respond in worship and obedience to him. These reminders of Israel's history pop up frequently in Scripture—not because *God* forgets, but because people do.

What symbols or stories remind you of God's presence with you? This week, try writing out your own story, noticing where God has shown up in your life. It can be helpful to write it out and keep it handy in case you find yourself starting to forget. When we forget God, it is easy to put ourselves or something else in his place.

Find a symbol (a rock, a cross, a necklace, etc.) and put it somewhere visible. If it's small, keep it in your pocket. Every time you see or touch it, it is a reminder of God's unfailing love for you.

*God, we praise you today with our hearts and songs, we praise you for your faithfulness and your great power and love. We confess our need for you; our lives don't go so well when we just spin around on our own. We struggle and worry, get weary and worn. Yet you never leave us. We ask for your Spirit to fill us and draw us close as we set our eyes on you. Amen.*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ibelieve.com/food-home/morning-prayers-to-center-yourself-in-gods-love.html>

## **Sunday Sermon Notes**

Monday, August 10

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 13:1–15.**

Key verse: “You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time.” (1 Sam 13:13)

We discussed the relationship between fear and obedience last week. What do Saul’s actions in this passage reveal about his view of God? Does he fear God more than the Philistines? Write your response:

We, too, get impatient and scared. We want to take action because God is taking too long to show up. Saul is chastised for it, and his kingdom will be taken from him and given to someone who will fear God more than people.

What things are you feeling impatient about? What would you like to see happen in your life? What does it look like to wait on God’s timing during this time?

*Patient Father, there are many things I do that would justify an impatient response. Thank you for choosing to show me grace.*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://reclaimtoday.org/a-prayer-for-patience/>

Tuesday, August 11

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 13:16–22.**

Key verse: On the day of the battle, not a soldier with Saul and Jonathan had a sword or spear in his hand; only Saul and Jonathan had them. (1 Sam 13:22)

Israel was woefully ill-equipped to fight their enemy, the Philistines. They had only farming tools and these they had to take to the Philistines to have them sharpened. They had no military weapons and no means of defeating their oppressors. The state of Israel is dire.

When we look at our world, we may feel entirely underequipped to fight oppression, injustice, poverty, slavery, racism, and lack of health care and education in remote places. What resources do you have at your fingertips? They may feel as inadequate to the task as farming tools for a battle, but they are what you have. List 2-3 resources below and then talk to God about how they are currently (or could be) used to fight injustice in your world.

*God, thank you for these resources: \_\_\_\_\_.  
They feel small and inadequate to meet the needs that I  
see in the world. Take these things and multiply them  
for your goodness and glory today. Amen.*

Wednesday, August 12

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 14:1–14.**

Key verse: “Nothing can keep the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few.” (1 Sam 14:6, CSB)

Jonathan acts as a lone wolf with only his armor-bearer to assist him. Jonathan’s faith in YHWH spurs him into action to confront an entire Philistine troop. His courage is contrasted with Saul’s fear and impatience.

Yesterday, we discussed having few resources in our battle against oppression and evil in our world. Today, we see that Jonathan he was not daunted by the size of the enemy but fought them with only his armor-bearer at his back, trusting that God would assist him in some supernatural way.

You can’t fight every evil thing in our world, so name one or two areas where you can take up the fight courageously (e.g. creation care, Soup Kitchen or food supply, knitting for charity, donating time or money, building relationships with your neighbour). Who has God given you to help you with this task?

*God of love and life, restore us to your peace, renew us through your power and teach us to love all that you have created and to care for the earth as your gift and our home.<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.praying-nature.com/>

Thursday, August 13

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 14:15–23.**

Key verse: On that day the Lord saved Israel. (1 Sam 14:23)

The battle is supernaturally won—Jonathan’s courage spurred the Israelites on to fight the Philistines and win. Sometimes, all we need is a spark: a Rosa Parks or Nelson Mandela or your average Lethbridge citizen. The American civil rights movement would not have happened if not for the courage of average Black citizens calling for justice.

What movements for justice are possible in our world today? In Lethbridge? It could be as simple as committing to purchasing Fair Trade coffee or buying thrift instead of commercially produced clothing. How can you be a spark of courage in your community?

*Father, fill the hearts of mankind with the fire of your love and with the desire to ensure justice for all. By sharing the good things you give us, may we secure an equality for all people throughout the world.<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://socialjusticeresourcecenter.org/prayers/justice/>

Friday, August 14

**Read or listen to Ps 30:1–12.**

Key verse: Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me. (Ps 30:2)

Saul makes the same mistake that Eli's sons did—he asks for the ark of God to be brought into battle, and it is only a swing in the battle that prevents this from occurring. Still, the author makes it very clear that *the Lord* saved Israel. The ark is not necessary for God's power to be made known.

Healing and victory over evil are guaranteed through God's ongoing presence in the world. This was shown to Israel in 1 Samuel and was decisively declared through Jesus' crowning achievement on the cross. It can be easy to be discouraged by all that is still broken in our world; it is, after all, impossible for humans to fix in on our own.

But this is the good news—we are not on our own. We have a God who defeats evil and destroys every system of oppression, who heals our trauma, physical pain, emotional distress, and spiritual emptiness. We won't see every part of the world healed before Jesus returns, but we can catch a glimpse of it through the ways in which the Spirit moves through his Church today.

Write, sing, or draw a prayer of praise (or find one online) for God's already-but-not-yet victory in the world.

Saturday, August 15

**Read or listen to Ps 125:1–5.**

Key verse: O Lord, do good to those who are good,  
whose hearts are in tune with you. (Ps 125:4, NLT)

It is important to remember that God’s battle is always against *evil* and not against *people*. When the Bible uses language like “the wicked” or paints an entire nation as the enemy of God’s people, it is tempting to create “us” and “them” categories: *we* are holy, *they* are wicked.

Remember that the Bible is an ancient book written to ancient people who lived in a time of tribal warfare that always represented the battles of their gods. When God goes to battle against a nation, he battles their gods. He fights against their practices of violence and harm to others. The Philistines were known for their militaristic expansion, which was done with great brutality toward the vulnerable populations of the nations they conquered. God called his people—the Israelites—to live *differently* than these other nations. They were supposed to be *good*—to care for one another, including those seeking refuge from other nations, the poor, and the marginalized.

How can Christians live differently than the rest of the world? When the world calls for violence (racial or social superiority, gender inequality, or flat-out war), how can we be *good* in God’s eyes? Talk to God about it.

Sunday, August 16

**If you have the time, read or listen to 1 Sam 13:1–14:23.**

What stands out to you from the passage this week?  
What do you still have questions about?

What does this passage show you about the character of God? Where was he present or absent?

What is the role of God's people in fighting evil and oppression in our world? Talk to your household, a friend, or family member about this.

*Heavenly Father, we pray for the poorest and most vulnerable. Let us not just speak of justice, but let us act in just ways. May the oppressed and needy feel justice and equality and experience a world without hunger and poverty. Amen.*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://socialjusticeresourcecenter.org/prayers/justice/>

**Sunday Sermon Notes**

Monday, August 17

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 14:24–35.**

Key verse: Then someone said to Saul, “Look, the men are sinning against the Lord.” (1 Sam 14:33)

After the supernatural victory over the Philistines led by Jonathan, the people are not celebrating as we might expect. Instead, they are distressed because their king had bound them with an oath to not eat food until he had avenged himself on his enemies. Jonathan, unaware of the oath, eats honey to fortify himself. The army, starving and feeling the effects of low blood sugar, slaughters their plunder in desperation and eats it without cooking it—a direct violation of God’s commands in Lev 17:13–14 and Deut 12:20–25.

Making an oath to the Lord was a serious matter. However, the manner of Saul’s oath is suspicious—he makes the oath binding *for the people*, not for himself, and the oath is *for his benefit*, not for the people’s benefit. In practice, it harms the people and leads them to breaking God’s Law.

Our words matter. While we may not make vows to the same extent to which the ancient Israelites often did, our words still have the power to lift up or harm others. What effect are your words having on others today?

*Heavenly Father, I confess where my words have harmed others. Forgive me. May my words build others up in love. Amen.*

Tuesday, August 18

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 14:36–45.**

Key verse: God did not answer him that day. (1 Sam 14:37)

Saul builds an altar to the Lord, but he only inquires of God when the priest reminds him to do so. And *God does not answer him*. The author is careful to provide us with details about where God shows up or is silent. Paying attention to these details helps us to notice what God is or isn't doing. In this passage, despite Saul's oath and his use of God's name, God is silent. What does this silence say about God's approval or disapproval of Saul's actions?

We, too, can use God's name without being aware of his presence or absence in our lives. Saul's words result in nearly killing his own son in God's name—even though God had directly condemned this (Lev 20:2–5, Deut 12:31). When placed within the broader picture of God's commands and character, Saul's actions seem clearly out of line. What sorts of things do we claim God's name for? Are these things helping—or harming—others?

*In your name, we are light in the world. For your name, we resist darkness. To your name be glory. Amen.*

Wednesday, August 19

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 14:46–51.**

Key verse: After Saul had assumed rule over Israel, he fought against their enemies on every side. (1 Sam 14:47)

Scripture contains many paradoxes. God's people are not black and white moral examples for us to follow. This passage is Saul's eulogy: he is the king Israel asked for, and he does his duty in delivering the Israelites from their enemies, but it comes at a cost. The warnings of Samuel come true as Saul takes Israel's best men for his army. Saul's failures as king are hinted at—he claims God's name but does not act in accordance with God's Law. Israel serves their king at the cost of their lives, and God's supernatural power in battle is nowhere to be found.

People are not black and white either, which is what makes it easy to relate to Saul. We, too, get it right sometimes and we mess up at other times. The author of 1 Samuel leaves it up to us to interpret Saul's actions. What will this king be remembered for? What actions will *you* be remembered for?

*O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <https://commonprayer.net>

Thursday, August 20

**Read or listen to Exod 19:1–8.**

Key verse: “Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.” (Exod 19:5–6, NLT)

After God had saved Israel from slavery in Egypt, he calls them to be his special people. This is not a one-sided relationship, though. Carmen Joy Imes says, “He saved them first, and then gave them the gift that goes with salvation, instructions on how to live as free men and women.”<sup>9</sup> This is called the *covenant*: God saved his people, and then invites them to continue a relationship with him by obeying him, and as a result, they will spread his salvation through the whole world.

However, Saul’s relationship with God appears to be broken. He builds an altar, but he makes a rash vow that endangers his soldiers. He inquires of God and invokes God’s name, but God does not answer him. Something is wrong.

What is your connection with God like these days? Are you spending time with him? God’s silence is often an invitation to *be with him* in prayer. Talk to God honestly about how you feel about your relationship with him.

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<sup>9</sup> Imes, *Bearing God’s Name*, 35.

Friday, August 21

**Read or listen to Exod 20:1–17.**

Key verse: “You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God.” (Exod 20:7, NLT)

In the passage known as the Ten Commandments, God tells his people *exactly* how to worship him. Carmen Joy Imes says again, “As his treasured possession, Israel’s vocation—the thing they were born to do—is to represent God to the rest of humanity. They function in priestly ways, mediating between Yahweh and everyone else. They are set apart for his purpose.”<sup>10</sup>

Saul, too, was set apart—*anointed*—for a purpose: to represent God to his people and lead them in obeying God. After Jesus, through the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, this anointing is now on *everyone who confesses Jesus as their King*. We, the church of Christ, are set apart for a purpose: to represent God to the world and lead them in obeying him. This is what it means to bear God’s name well.

We often think that misusing God’s name means only swearing, but Scripture shows us that it is about how we are representing him to the world in what we do and say. In what ways are you bearing God’s name today?

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<sup>10</sup> Imes, *Bearing God’s Name*, 51.

Saturday, August 22

**Read or listen to Matt 5:33–37.**

Key verse: “Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” (Matt 5:37)

“I promise I’ll. . .”

“I swear. . .”

How often do you make promises to others? Are they promises that you can keep? Are they simply words that you tack on to the rest of your statement to make them carry more weight?

Jesus had something to say about making oaths: rather than relying on grand oaths to prove your truthfulness, let your words simply mean what they mean. Your character should be so reliable that your simple, honest statement is enough.

In Saul’s case, the hard work of his army should have been enough; he should not have felt the need to persuade them with an oath that starved them and caused disobedience to God. But he did, thinking that his words would lend motivation to finish the fight.

Meditate on these words from Paul: *Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.* (Eph 4:29, NLT)

Sunday, August 23

**If you have the time, read or listen to 1 Sam 14:24–51.**

What stands out to you from the passage this week?  
What do you still have questions about?

What does this passage show you about the character of God? Where was he present or absent?

In our world, oaths are much less common than they were at one time. They take place mostly in a legal setting—in a courtroom for a trial, or at a wedding. What do you think about the taking of oaths in these situations? What does it mean for our ‘Yes’ to be ‘Yes’?

*Lord God, we pray for honesty in our lives. Help us to speak and act truthfully in all situations. May we be honest with ourselves and with others, building trust and integrity in our relationships. Amen.*<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.tmumc.org/stories/posts/a-prayer-for-honesty>

**Sunday Sermon Notes**

Monday, August 24

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 15:1–9.**

Key verse: [The best of the sheep and cattle] they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed. (1 Sam 15:9)

This is one of those confusing passages in Scripture where God's people are told to *totally destroy* their enemy, including children and infants. How can we reconcile this with a God who is loving and compassionate (Exod 34:6–7)?

It might be helpful to remember that 1) the ancient world was marked by violence that was often understood as the gods fighting for power amongst themselves, and 2) God's plan of redemption was to eliminate the evil practices of child sacrifice and sexual harm that often occurred in war and worship.

When God tells his people to *totally destroy* another nation, he is declaring war on their gods. When he defeats that nation, he defeats that god entirely and refuses to allow their harmful, violent practices to continue. God acts for justice on behalf of the people whom the Amalekites had harmed. This is his purpose: justice, always.

Jesus was our Divine Warrior who decisively conquered evil for all time. How did Jesus' actions on the cross change *who* or *what* we are fighting in the cosmic war against evil? What does this look like for us today?

Tuesday, August 25

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 15:10–23.**

Key verse: “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.” (1 Sam 15:22)

Saul ignored God’s command to kill every living thing that belonged to the Amalekites. He was unwilling to kill the best of the herds, choosing instead to keep them for himself. He pays a steep price for his disobedience—God has rejected him as king because he rejected God’s commands.

Saul tried to justify his actions, stating that he really meant for the best of the herds to be sacrificed to God. But Samuel responds, “To obey is better than sacrifice.” God would rather that we obey him than spend our lives trying to offer “the best” that we can to him. He asks that we obey him in the little things, and sometimes the hard things, too.

How is God calling you to obey him? What sorts of things stop you from obeying him completely? Talk to God about it.

Wednesday, August 26

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 15:24–35.**

Key verse: “You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!” (1 Sam 15:26)

Saul’s downfall is complete. He has openly rejected God’s command, deciding that he didn’t *really* have to do as God said. What could be so bad about taking something good for himself?

This is exactly the temptation that the man and woman experienced in the garden. The serpent stalked up to them and said, “Did God really say. . .?” (Gen 3:1) Instead of trusting in God to care for them, they doubted God’s goodness and decided that they could do life their own way. And so, God rejected them because they rejected *him*.

Saul’s hesitation about killing the herds wasn’t about some ethical goodheartedness. He didn’t stop killing the Amalekites because he felt bad for them, but because it served his interests to keep the herds for himself. His so-called sacrifices to God weren’t what God asked of him; God only wanted Saul to obey him and *trust him* to know what was best.

What sorts of things are you being tempted to trust in? How is God inviting you to trust *him* instead?

*God, when I am tempted to trust in my own strength and ambition, help me to fix my eyes on you and trust that you are good. Amen.*

Thursday, August 27

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 16:1–7.**

Key verse: “People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Sam 16:7, NLT)

God sees the hearts of David’s brothers. Even though they look strong and handsome, they are not right for the job that God is choosing one of them for. Saul, too, was handsome and tall, but he has failed to trust and obey God above everything else. He put his trust in his own strength instead. Looks aren’t everything.

God sees your heart—he sees all of you, all your strengths and weaknesses, all your desires and thoughts. He knows where you will fail; he knows where you will thrive. Your *character* matters more than what you wear or what position you hold.

Spend a few minutes with God today and ask him what, exactly, he sees in you. What is in your heart? What does your heart want to tell God? How does he respond?

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. (Ps 139:23–24)*

Friday, August 28

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 16:8–13.**

Key verse: From that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David. (1 Sam 16:13)

David is chosen—not for his good looks or height, but for his heart. God searched for a man after his own heart and found it in David.

This doesn't mean that David was perfect or that he is a model example for us to follow. No, he's still human and will still make some mistakes (some big ones!). But, at the end of the day, he always returns to God, and that makes all the difference. The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David, filling him with God's presence and power even though he is a humble shepherd.

God likes to choose the underdogs, the small people who have very little power but have all the heart to follow him. The apostle Paul says, "I will boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me" (2 Cor 12:9). When we are weak, we have no choice but to depend on God to deliver us and work through us.

Are you feeling weak today? How is God inviting you to depend on him for strength? Talk to God about it.

Saturday, August 29

**Read or listen to Ps 21:1–13.**

Key verse: “For the king trusts in the Lord; through the unfailing love of the Most High he will not be shaken.”  
(Ps 21:7)

God’s initial plan for the people of Israel was that *he* would be their king and that his relationship with them was mediated by the priests. However, Israel’s stubbornness resulted in their abandonment of God time and time again. As we read earlier, they eventually cried out for a king, and God gave them Saul. However, while Saul looked like he would be a powerful king, his character was flawed. He preferred to do things his own way rather than wait for God to show up or obey God’s direct commands.

And so, God finds another king, David—a man after his own heart. This king is supposed to trust in God and be firmly established in him. This is the hope—through this faithful king, all of Israel will return to a right relationship with God! Where the king goes, so goes the nation.

Who is our King today—God, or the leaders of our nation? How does this inspire you to pray for the nations of the world today?

*Lord, may your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.*

Sunday, August 30

**If you have the time, read or listen to 1 Sam 15:1–16:13.**

When we read difficult passages about God commanding entire people groups to be killed, we must adjust our reading lenses. We can either read the character of God *through the events of the ancient world*, or we can read the events of the ancient world *through the character of God*. If we read it with the knowledge that God can *only* ever be good and just, then we must read passages like this as God’s fight against *evil*, not against *people*.

Later in Scripture, God will also “totally destroy” Israel for their repeated evil patterns of child sacrifice and pagan worship—God is indiscriminate against evil, choosing to eliminate it at all costs, even when it is against his own people.

What stands out to you from the passage this week?  
What do you still have questions about?

What does this passage show you about the character of God? Where was he present or absent?

*Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. (Ps 20:7)*

**Sunday Sermon Notes**

Monday, August 31

**Read or listen to 1 Sam 16:13–14.**

Key verse: The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on David. . . the Spirit of the Lord had left Saul. (1 Sam 16:13–14, NLT)

These verses in the middle of 1 Sam 16 highlight for us the difference between David and Saul: David is given the Holy Spirit, while the Spirit leaves Saul. This is a sign of God’s favour—he gives his favour to David but removes it from Saul due to Saul’s disobedience.

Some versions say that God sent an “evil spirit” on Saul. The Hebrew word *ra’* can be translated as *evil*, *harmful*, *malicious*, or *unpleasant*. The contrast between the Spirit on David and the spirit on Saul is what the reader is supposed to pay attention to. When we reject God, he removes his Spirit from us, and we are left with the possibility of other spirits moving into the vacuum. Jesus talks more about this in Lk 11:24–25.

This does not mean that we are victims to the whim of spirits. Instead, we have a choice: Will we love God and allow his Spirit to *transform* us, or will we love our own way more and allow other spirits to *deform* us? Talk to God about it.

Scan this QR code to learn more about the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup>



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<sup>12</sup> <https://bibleproject.com/videos/holy-spirit/>

