

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

MONDAY Samuel set up a stone monument near to where the battle was won, and he named it “Ebenezer” because the Lord helped His people there. Ebenezer means ‘The Stone of Help’ in Hebrew. As long as Samuel lived, Israel dominated the Philistines, and there was peace in the land. He judged Israel for the rest of his life, following a sort of circuit court. His home continued to be in Ramah.

I Samuel 7:12-17

A good title for this section might be “God Honors Those Who Honor Him”. Samuel is honored by peace in the land while he is the judge. There was peace in the land for a whole lifetime because Samuel honored God! Who can tell what God might be pleased to do with our obedience today? Let’s give Him the chance to demonstrate!

TUESDAY When Samuel become older, he appointed his two sons, Joel and Abijah, to judge with him over Israel. But they were dishonest, and perverted justice. The leaders of the nation, distressed at the thought of Samuel dying and leaving these two sons in charge of things, pleaded with him to select a king for the country instead.

I Samuel 8:1-5

I wonder if Samuel recognized that his boys did not share his heart for God? If he did, I wonder what possessed him to place them in positions of authority? We don’t know. But we remember that Samuel’s example in raising kids was Eli. I wonder if Eli had any idea that his own failure to obey God in the matter of disciplining his kids would have such an on-going affect. On the other hand, a life lived in obedience to the Lord may carry over into generations yet un-born. Let us so live!

WEDNESDAY Samuel was not happy with the idea of Israel having a king. He complained to the Lord. God said that the people were rejecting Him, not just Samuel, and that he should give them their king. However, God told Samuel to warn them again, more sternly, about the dangers of having a king.

I Samuel 8:6-9

Samuel took the demand of the people hard -- as if it were a personal rejection of his own leadership. God set the record straight – the people were rejecting God’s leadership, not Samuel’s. We would do well to remember this as well: we are servants of God. When we serve Him well, there will be those who reject us. But in truth, they are rejecting Him. We don’t handle rejection well, but God handles it perfectly. Sometimes, He chooses to turn it all around, so that the one who rejects him today, follows Him tomorrow. What an amazing and merciful God He is!

THURSDAY Samuel warned the people that having a king over them would be very different and difficult. A king, he warns, takes your sons to be in his army, and your daughters to serve in his palace. He takes the best of the fields for himself and takes the best part of the crops for his friends.

I Samuel 8:10-15

As Samuel started listing some of the ways in which their lives would be different, I wonder what the people were thinking? Later on we are told that they refused to listen to Samuel’s warning so I think it’s safe to assume that they were not convinced. In the end, they thought that they knew better. They leaned towards their own understanding and in all their ways, they did not acknowledge God. Wow! This is scary to read because we can probably recall some times when we knew better than God; some times when we refused to listen. All that Samuel warned the people about came true within a very short time. And it was all much worse than even what Samuel was saying.

FRIDAY Samuel continued warning the people about the dangers of having a king over them. A king takes all the servants he wants; he takes any flocks he chooses. He can even take ordinary citizens and make them servants. A king does not listen to his subjects. But the people answered Samuel back saying that they want to be like all the nations around them. They want to have a king. God told Samuel to appoint them a king. Samuel commanded the people to return to their homes.

I Samuel 8:16-22

The mystery is solved as to why the people were so determined to have a king even when they were so severely warned about it. They wanted to be like all the nations around them. That’s called *keeping up with the Jones*. If only they had remembered that God made them to be a unique and separated people - a particular people - different from all the other peoples on the earth. They were to be the people of God! If only they had found contentment in being His. If only we would desire above all else to be the people of God in our own day. If only we would gladly bear the title ‘Christ’s one’ (Christian). Let us say what the people of Samuel’s day would not say: that we have decided to follow Jesus and leave the world behind us.

SATURDAY Rather than have God rule over them, the people demanded that they have a king. So the scene shifts to the family of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin. Kish’s son, Saul, stood out from the crowd. On one occasion, some donkeys were lost. Saul and a servant set out to find them. Unable to locate them, the servant suggested that they seek out Samuel who perhaps could tell them where the donkeys were hiding.

I Samuel 9:1-10

This passage describes Saul - the people’s choice. God was giving the people a king after their own heart. Later, God will choose for them a King (David) after His own heart! God gave the people exactly what they wanted so that they would, later on, look back and see how faulty their own value system had been. The tale of the donkey hunt emphasizes the lowliness of Saul’s position in life (he was a donkey hunter!) until God raised him up to be King. Remember Hannah’s song of praise in I Sam.2:8? *He raises up the poor out of the dust to set them among princes*. Let us never forget that all we are and have come from God.

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