



Part 7 - "When God's Love Is Still Near" | 1 Samuel 7:1-5 | Dec 21, 2025

→ **Question:** *Where did I notice God's nearness this past year? Where did I resist it?*

→ 1 Samuel 7:1-2 — The Ark is Back

- Notice: Something feels *off* — no celebrating, no Yahweh worship
They simply put the ark in storage!
- (7:2b) "turned back to" = lamented / mourned
This was a long and painful process of returning to the LORD
—20 years!
- Israel's hearts were *reluctant to give up* the ways of the world and simply be the Kingdom of God.

→ 1 Samuel 7:3-4 — Israel's process of coming back to the LORD

- (v3) "**IF** you are returning to the LORD..."
That "If" carries a lot of weight—20 years of continued idol worship needs to stop
- (v3-4) "the foreign gods" — didn't demand exclusive loyalty
 - **Baal** 🖐️ thought to have the power over nature (rains) - *meant good crops*
 - **Ashtoreth** 🖐️ thought to have power over fertility and life
 - The Israelite's main sin was misdirected **allegiance**
 - **Exodus 20:3, 5** — "*You shall have no other gods before me...*"
- (v4) Giving up their idol worship was their **spiritual act of surrender**
—this was all they knew! They'd been worshiping idols since Judges 10
—idol worship fostered their resistance to God's nearness.
—Samuel's words invite us to reflect on our own lives

➡ Israel's Repentance — God's Love — Our Response

- God's love made repentance possible (*not the other way around*)
 - Romans 2:4b - *God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance.*
- **God's patience** made room for repentance to finally take root in Israel's heart

➡ God's Love

- 1 Samuel 7 shows God's love in action
- Romans 2:4b tells us the purpose of that love
- Psalm 103 puts language to that love...

➡ Psalm 103 — God's patient, steadfast and enduring love

- (v8) compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in **love** (*hesed*)
 - God is patient with us even when we find ourselves resisting Him
- (v10) His patience and love is a gift — not earned — *that's grace*
- (v11) unfailing, unchanging, unearned, *unmanipulatable*, unequalled **love**
- (v12) despite our past sins or hesitations, the Lord's forgiveness stands
- (v17) His love enables us to press on — even if we fail, His love doesn't

➡ MAIN IDEA — Hesitation toward the Lord is not the same as rejection, but it does reveal where trust needs to grow.

- When we hesitate to respond to God's nearness,
 - we're choosing to **manage it**
 - this is what Israel did for 20 years!
 - Israel didn't fully trust for a long time, yet **God remained patient** out of love
- **QUESTION: Where might God be gently revealing areas in my life where trust can grow?**
- Advent Love is God staying near even when we hesitate, resist, or manage
 - Advent reminds us that Jesus is not distant
 - His love is patient enough to meet us right where we are