

MESSAGE

Earlier this week I shared something on Facebook about the goal of reading the Bible in a year. That's not a bad goal...

But the Bible has 1,189 chapters! To keep up, we'd have to read about three chapters a day. Which doesn't sound too bad until you get to chapters like Psalm 119 (*six pages* in my small-print bible)!

Add to that the fact that *life happens*.

We'll eventually miss a day... then two... then three... and suddenly playing catch up feels *impossible*.

The Youversion Bible-in-a-Year app that Amanda and I are using actually says how many days behind you are—which I think is unfortunate. Because the goal was never meant to be how much we can consume in a certain amount of time.

God's Word was given to us for a lifetime of study, contemplation, and daily application. We're not meant to hurry through it.

We're meant to *rest* in His Word... let it *linger*... give it the time and space it deserves to **reform our heart**.

Psalm 1 says:

[SLIDE 1] Psalm 1:1-2 - Blessed is the one ... whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.

Biblical meditation is never about *emptying* our minds or even *rushing to fill* our minds. **Meditating on God's Word is about letting it slowly seep into our hearts.**

It's about returning to the same verse, the same passage, again and again... allowing every word to reshape who we are as God's people.

In fact, God describes His Word as something to be written on our hearts. It's to be kept close and carried with us through daily life. It's not meant to be rushed. It's meant to be *lived with*.¹

And so, **it's tempting to quickly read passages like 1 Samuel 10 and think: "Okay. I got it. Saul became king."** Then move on.

But if we slow down and let it marinate in our hearts and minds... We'll realize that this is so much more than a history lesson.

[SLIDE 2] 1 Samuel 9–10 reveals what it looks like when God forms people to trust Him.

Throughout Scripture, **God forms His people in two primary ways:** Through His *Word*, and through *lived experience*.

God speaks...

and then He walks with people as they **learn to trust His Word**.

That's exactly what's happening in our passage today. Everything Saul experienced was for the purpose of **shaping his trust in the LORD**.

And — to be fair — I don't know about you, but when I think about Saul, I usually think about how he mistreated David and how he would sin against the LORD.

But that's not where we're at in the story.
Saul isn't the villain in these chapters.

He does represent Israel's rejection of Yahweh as their King. But even in light of that, the LORD still chooses to reveal Himself to Saul.

And Saul's not outright rejecting the LORD... not yet anyway. Saul's more or less confused and afraid of what the LORD has planned.

So, what I want us to notice this morning is *how Saul reacts to God's leading. Because...*

¹ Deuteronomy 6:6–9; Proverbs 3:3, 6:21, 7:1-3; Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Corinthians 3:3

[SLIDE 3] How Saul responds to the LORD tells us a lot...

Last week we saw the LORD reveal Himself to Saul in a few unexpected ways:

- Saul was looking for his donkeys, but found Samuel instead
- Saul was worried about his donkeys, but the LORD kept them safe
- And Saul planned to go home, but Samuel honored him with a meal

Saul's response to all of this was **confusion...**

[SLIDE 4] Saul's Response: "But I'm a *nobody!* Why in the world would you honor me?!" (1 Samuel 9:21)

God was already forming Saul before he even realized it.

And, I love that!

There's a real sense of comfort that comes in knowing that even though we may not understand everything that's going on, the LORD is still working.

There's *never* a moment when His will takes a break or slides off track.

God is *never* distracted.

He's *never* caught off guard or surprised by our confusion.

He's *always* in control.

His will *always* remains steady—forming and reshaping us as His followers, even before we realize what He's doing.

And so, for Saul, this is just the beginning.

The question is:

How will he respond once he sees that the LORD had plans for him?

[SLIDE 5] 1 Samuel 9:25–10:8 — Signs from God

The next morning Samuel privately anoints Saul as king.

And as Saul heads home, Samuel tells him that several things will happen.

Saul will:

- meet two men on the road, confirming that the donkeys were found
- then meet three men who offer him a couple loaves of bread
- then meet a group of musical prophets — and the Spirit of the LORD will come on him powerfully, so much so that Saul will prophesy with them

All of these things happened! And look at how it affected Saul...

[SLIDE 6] 1 Samuel 10:9 - As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day.

What does it mean that God *changed* Saul's heart?

Well, this isn't talking about the Holy Spirit *indwelling* Saul as He does with believers today.

This is the LORD empowering Saul for the moment he's in.

When the scripture says that the Spirit of God came powerfully upon Saul, that's talking about God changing Saul's heart for ***this moment*** — it's a snapshot in Saul's story, not the whole picture.

But his changed heart was itself a sign from God!

Look at how people reacted when they heard Saul prophesying...

[SLIDE 7] 1 Samuel 10:11 - When all those who had formerly known him saw him prophesying with the prophets, they asked each other, "What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Clearly they knew Saul. They knew this wasn't his typical behavior.

In fact, it was so odd that people all over were wondering what exactly happened here.

But again, this was just a moment in time.

Saul didn't keep prophesying.

Once he stopped, he moved on.

Eventually he ran into his uncle. His uncle asked where he'd been.

Look at Saul's response:

[SLIDE 8] 1 Samuel 10:14-16 - "Looking for the donkeys," he said. "But when we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel." Saul's uncle said, "Tell me what Samuel said to you." Saul replied, "He assured us that the donkeys had been found." But he did not tell his uncle what Samuel had said about the kingship.

Now... I have to ask:

What sticks out to you here?

Saul didn't say *anything* about being anointed as Israel's king!!

I mean... that's kind of a big deal!

You'd think he'd say *something*!

But the writer wants us to notice his **silence**.

Why?

Is it out of fear? Humility? Confusion? Disbelief?

We don't know yet!

The writer keeps us hanging in that silence on purpose.

Because, in this moment,

Silence IS Saul's response to God's call.

What does this tell us?

[SLIDE 9] Spiritual experiences don't automatically produce obedience

Saul was anointed as king. He experienced the Holy Spirit. He prophesied publicly. He received *several* confirming signs that God was with him.

And yet...

Saul said nothing.
He kept it to himself.

Notice that we haven't really seen Saul trust in the LORD yet.

He's experienced some amazing things.
The LORD has clearly worked through him.
Samuel even said the LORD would be with Saul in whatever he does.
But there's still plenty of room for God to work on his heart.

Scripture warns us in more than one place that:

[SLIDE 10] Spiritual activity [performance] and spiritual maturity [trust] are not the same thing

Remember what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount?
He taught that there would be people who did many things in His name...
Even amazing, powerful things...
And yet they never truly knew Him.²

It's not that God didn't work through them.
It's that their hearts were misaligned.
Jesus wanted to form their hearts to look like His.
But they were too focused on their own *spiritual activity*.

Following Jesus isn't about performance. It's about trust.
They never learned to walk with a steady trust in the LORD.

And, at this point, that's where Saul's at in the story.
He hasn't rejected God.
But he also hasn't brought himself to fully trust in the LORD.

And that shows with how he responds in the next scene...

[SLIDE 11] 1 Samuel 10:17-22 — Saul publicly made king

² Matthew 7:21-23

Samuel gathers the people of Israel to the LORD in a town called Mizpah. Mizpah was a place where Israel held national assemblies for things like leadership transitions.

But what's interesting is that Mizpah was *NOT* their main place for worship. The LORD was there in this moment, but the Ark of the LORD wasn't.

That matters.

Israel's first king begins his calling without *the* central symbol of God's throne. It's a subtle thing in the text.

But it underscores Israel's rejection of Yahweh as their King.

Again, this is a **tragedy**.

And **Samuel doesn't hold back the truth of that.**

He says *outright* to everyone there:

[SLIDE 12] 1 Samuel 10:19 - “you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your disasters and calamities. And you have said, ‘No, appoint a king over us.’”

Talk about **bold words!** ...But even *this* is intentionally included in the narrative.

It's not new information. We already know from previous chapters that Israel rejected Yahweh. So does *1 Samuel* keep repeating it?

Because the writer wants us to see what it looks like when a person's faith in the LORD has been formed over a lifetime.

Samuel doesn't stay silent. He doesn't hesitate or hide.

He's not afraid to expose the hearts of those who drifted from the LORD.

He's willing to obey the LORD, even when he knows this isn't *exactly* what the LORD wants. This is what the people want.

And now the LORD is giving them over to *exactly* what they asked for.

But Israel still needs proof that this choice is really from the LORD.

So Samuel had everyone separate into their tribes:

[SLIDE 13] 1 Samuel 10:20 - When Samuel had all Israel come forward by tribes, the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot.

The idea here is that the LORD would show what tribe, family clan, and household, Israel's king would come from.

And the LORD's choice would be shown by taking "lots."

—kind of like drawing the short straw.

We don't know exactly how lots worked.

But the point is that **this was the LORD's choice.**

Samuel wasn't manipulating the outcome.

So, as lots were cast, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen first.

Then Matri's family clan.

And finally, the lots fell on Saul.

But when they looked for Saul, he was MIA!

So they "inquired further of the LORD," which means they probably looked at Samuel, wondering what was going on... *Was Saul here yet?*

[SLIDE 14] 1 Samuel 10:22 - And the LORD said, "Yes, he has hidden himself among the supplies."

Remember:

Saul had clear signs from the LORD that he would be king.

He experienced what it was like when the LORD was with him.

And yet, when asked about it, he was silent.

And now when confronted with the reality of his calling,

he's found hiding behind some boxes!

By the way, he's not the first person to try and avoid God's calling.

Remember Jonah?

Jonah was a genuine prophet of the LORD who got a clear calling to go to Nineveh and preach. How does he respond? He runs in the opposite direction and gets swallowed by a fish!

Saul's response isn't quite as dramatic,
but it's still the same hesitation toward the LORD's calling.
The comparison is important.

Think about Jonah, Saul, and Samuel:
Three people, chosen by the LORD.
None of them wanted to do what the LORD was asking.
But only one of them was willing to quietly trust the LORD and obey.

Notice that Samuel didn't protest when God called Him. He didn't hide or remain silent. He trusted the LORD and said what needed to be said.

Saul tried to hide. But you can't hide from the LORD.
Here's what happened when they found him...

**[SLIDE 15] 1 Samuel 10:23-24 - They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others.
Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.” Then the people shouted, “Long live the king!”**

Picture this moment: Saul is hiding behind the boxes.
The LORD reveals his hiding spot.
Then people rushed over to him and *forced* him to stand in front of everyone.

Maybe they drug him out by the arms and he's like:
I really don't wanna do this!

We don't know what he said. We just know they took him because they wanted someone that *looked* like a military leader, even if he wasn't ready for the job.

And now, Saul's standing there in front of everyone. Samuel officially presents Saul as the LORD's chosen king, and the people eagerly accept him. Then Samuel explained the rights and duties of a king. And when he finished, he sent everyone home.

[SLIDE 16] 1 Samuel 10:26-27 - Saul also went to his home in Gibeah, accompanied by valiant men whose hearts God had touched. But some scoundrels said, “How can this fellow save us?” They despised him and brought him no gifts. But Saul kept silent.

It's interesting that the nation was divided!

Some aligned with God's choice. These were “brave/valiant” men who were ready to serve in Saul's military.

Others despised God's choice.
All they could see was a tall and scared young man.

And what was Saul's final response to all of this?
Silence.

Again, that's not to say he was a failure... or that he's the villain of the story. He hasn't rejected God — he's just been caught hesitating and hiding from God's will. Much like Jonah.

The LORD was working in Saul's life.
At this point, Saul could still learn to trust in the LORD.
After all, look at his new mentor—Samuel.

Samuel was a man who not only learned to recognize the LORD's voice, but he also learned what it's like to obey the LORD's will — trusting the LORD even when the path forward isn't clear.

And so what we're seeing today is this:

[SLIDE 17] Spiritual growth isn't simply learning to recognize God's voice. It's the lifelong process of being formed to follow His Word, responding with trust and obedience, even when it feels uncomfortable.

Responding with trust and obedience is all about surrendering to God's will.

It's what Jesus taught us to pray:

"Father... Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

This isn't easy. It's easier to run and hide, or stay silent.

Praying for the LORD's will can be painful.

But it's also beautiful.

Because when we learn to surrender and trust that God is in control...

That's when He reforms our hearts to look more like His.

In our moments of surrender, we learn what trusting the LORD really feels like.

Sometimes it feels like a weight has been lifted—like a peace that's hard to describe. Other times, it may just feel like strength in the uncertainty.

Whatever our circumstances...

[SLIDE 18] We're formed to trust Jesus and His will as we learn to surrender to Him.

And so, the song we're about to sing asks: *Whom shall I fear?*

Will we fear our enemies? Will we fear our own circumstances?

Will we give in to the doubts of our own abilities?

Or will we trust in the One who goes before us;
the One who delivers us; the One who reigns forever?

May we trust in Jesus, our true King of Kings.

May we hold on to His promises and His truth.

Let's Pray