

## MESSAGE

Today's passage made me ask myself a question.

It's a simple question...

But depending on our season of life, it might be difficult.

I'm wondering:

**[NOTE] [SLIDE 1] How long is long enough to grieve?**

Scripture doesn't prescribe a length of time for us.

In some ways, it takes as long as it takes.

— especially depending on the situation.

### **Consider Samuel.**

His entire life is dedicated in service to the LORD.

Ever since he was a young boy working in the temple, the LORD was with him — teaching and guiding him in His ways.

And as Samuel grew, so did his reputation. No one doubted that the LORD was with him, because when he spoke as a prophet, his words always proved true.

He also served as Israel's Judge — showing people the ways of the LORD.

But as the years passed and Samuel grew old, Israel's trust in the LORD began to fade. Their fear of the surrounding nations grew to the point where they asked for a human king — because they didn't trust God as their King anymore.

Surprisingly, the LORD gave them exactly what they wanted — Saul. And Samuel's job was to teach him in the ways of the LORD.

He would've taken that responsibility very seriously.

But as we've seen, the only thing that grew in Saul was fear.

Like the rest of the nation, he let fear outweigh his trust in the LORD.

And now — here at the end of chapter 15 — Saul has rejected the Word of the LORD. And because of that, the LORD has rejected him as king.

Samuel knew this was coming eventually.  
The LORD warned everyone way back in chapter 8.  
But knowing it was coming didn't make Saul's downfall any easier.

### **And think about how Samuel felt.**

1 Samuel 15:11 tells us he was so angry that he stayed up all night, crying out to the LORD.

So he's angry.  
He's sleep deprived.  
And now... look at what he has to tell Saul:

**[SLIDE 2] 1 Samuel 15:28 - Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors—to one better than you."**

Samuel was more than angry.  
He *grieved* for Saul.

### **[NOTE] Samuel grieved for Saul**

Samuel spent years investing in Saul.  
Teaching him. Guiding him. Praying for him.

### **But to what end?**

Saul failed.  
The kingdom was falling apart.  
Samuel wasn't getting any younger.  
And the text tell us:

**[SLIDE 3] 1 Samuel 15:35a - Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him.**

Samuel would never go to see Saul again.  
In other words:  
His part in God's plan with Saul was finished.  
It was the end of an era.

### **Now what?**

Well, the only thing Samuel *could* do... was mourn.

And, you know, it's interesting...

**Samuel's not the only one who grieved...**

Look at what the LORD said:

**[NOTE] God grieves over sin**

**[SLIDE 4] 1 Samuel 15:35b - And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.**

This isn't God admitting to a mistake.

God doesn't make mistakes.

**But He does grieve over sin.**

In fact, this exact statement is seen back in Genesis 6 where God said:

**[SLIDE 5] Genesis 6:5-6 - The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth ... The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.**

Notice the pattern:

**Sin grows... and the LORD grieves.**

His heart was deeply troubled.

But He never leaves the story there.

**[NOTE] When the LORD grieves, that signals He's about to act.**

God *always* moves the story forward.

So, in 1 Samuel, the LORD and Samuel are grieving over Saul.

But look at what the LORD said to Samuel:

**[SLIDE 6] 1 Samuel 16:1a - "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel?"**

The LORD's question really stood out to me this week:

***How long will you mourn for Saul?***

This is a rare moment in Scripture.

Usually when the LORD asks “How long,”  
He’s exposing sin.

For example:

- Exodus 10:3 — *“How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?”*
- Numbers 14:11 — *“How long will these people treat me with contempt?”*
- Psalm 4:2 — *“How long will you people turn my glory into shame?”*

Again, in most cases, when the LORD asks “How long,”  
He’s confronting His people’s sin.

But when He confronts Samuel, it’s different.

Samuel isn’t sinning — he’s mourning.

But there’s something subtle happening in Samuel’s mourning that the LORD’s question reveals.

**[NOTE] Fear often enters during our most vulnerable moments**

Let’s look at it again:

**[SLIDE 7] 1 Samuel 16:1-2 - The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.” But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”**

Notice that when God says, “How long?”  
Samuel’s fear is revealed.

Because somewhere along the way,  
while Samuel was mourning,  
fear crept in.

I’m not saying this is a failure on Samuel’s part.  
I’m just saying that this is his reality.

Fear tends to crouch at our door,  
waiting to sneak in during our most vulnerable moments.

And when that happens,  
we begin to fear the unknown...  
what's next...  
or what might happen to us.

This isn't a sinful kind of fear.  
But left unchecked, it will slowly erode our trust in the LORD.

Thankfully, the LORD reveals Samuel's fear,  
and then he gives Samuel something actionable:  
*"I am sending you to Jesse."*

Samuel's fear causes him to hesitate:  
*"How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me."*

**So, the LORD invites Samuel to trust Him.**

He said:

**[SLIDE 8] 1 Samuel 16:3 - Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.**

The LORD made it clear:  
*"I will show you what to do."*

The ball is in Samuel's court.

**Will Samuel trust the LORD?  
Or will he let fear control him?**

I love what happens next. The text just says:

**[NOTE] Samuel chose trust over fear**

**[SLIDE 9] 1 Samuel 16:4a - Samuel did what the LORD said.**

That's it.

No editing God's Word.  
No debating.

No bargaining.

He simply obeyed.

Fear was there — but it didn't control him.

He chose to let his trust in the LORD outweigh his fear.

**So Samuel has one more job to do:**

Go to Bethlehem.

Find Jesse and his sons.

And invite them to gather before the LORD.

It's funny though...

**[SLIDE 10] 1 Samuel 16:4b - When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?"**

Again — here's another moment of fear!

But why would they fear Samuel?

Well, everyone knew Samuel was a prophet of the LORD.

And sometimes when the prophets spoke, they declared the LORD's judgment.

This is probably why they trembled.

But Samuel came in peace.

As far as they knew, he was there to sacrifice to the LORD.

But this was the moment when the LORD would reveal the next king.

**[SLIDE 11] 1 Samuel 16:6 - When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD."**

**[SLIDE 12] 1 Samuel 16:7 - But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."**

**[NOTE] The LORD looks at the heart.**

This echoes back to 1 Samuel 13 where Samuel told Saul:  
*the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart.*

And now we begin to see how the LORD reveals that heart.  
One by one, Jesse's sons begin to pass before Samuel:

**[SLIDE 13] 1 Samuel 16:8-10 - Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the LORD chosen this one." Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these."**

I love this image of "passing by."

It reminds me of that Exodus 34 moment we talked about last week where the LORD passed by in front of Moses — revealing the character of God: His compassionate, slow to anger, loving—yet just—kind of character.

But here in 1 Samuel 16, the LORD is revealing something different.  
As Jesse's sons pass by in front of Samuel,  
the LORD is revealing the hearts of His people.

Yet so far... none of Jesse's sons were chosen.

**[SLIDE 14] 1 Samuel 16:11 - So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered. "He is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives."**

Notice that it's not just that there was one more son to consider...  
It's that this son wasn't even invited!

He was the youngest... the least qualified...  
They didn't even bother to invite him.

To be fair, maybe because *someone* had to tend the sheep?  
But clearly no one expected David to be the one God would choose.

And by the way — that’s no disrespect to his dad, Jesse!  
No one in this culture would have thought to bring the youngest of eight sons.  
Not even David would have expected to be there.

But Samuel was persistent.  
Rather than trusting Jesse, he trusted in the LORD’s Word.  
He thought: *There must be someone else!*

And sure enough... there was.

**[SLIDE 15] 1 Samuel 16:12 - So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”**

**What was it about David that the LORD chose him?**

Apparently he looked good.  
—but the LORD doesn’t look at outward appearance.  
He also had some experience as a shepherd.  
—but chances are, all of Jesse’s sons had experience in that area.

**The thing is, as readers, we know why the LORD chose David.  
—it’s because David was a man after God’s own heart.**

But isn’t it interesting that we don’t see *any* evidence of that yet?

At this point in the story, we don’t know anything about David’s character.  
And for that matter — Samuel doesn’t either!

I think that’s interesting.

Because as readers, we’re sort of in Samuel’s shoes.  
We’re left to trust that the LORD knew exactly what He was doing when He chose David.

The point here is this:

**[NOTE] God saw something in David that no one else could see — His heart.**

And — honestly, I find this fascinating:

When you step back and look at the whole story, you begin to realize that the heart has been one of the main themes running throughout the entire book of Samuel.

- Hannah prayed with her heart, rejoicing in the LORD<sup>1</sup>
- Samuel served the LORD according to His heart and encouraged everyone to do the same<sup>2</sup>
- Others like Eli, Saul and his army, all had hearts that feared<sup>3</sup>
- And now with David, we know that he's been found to be a man after God's own heart.

What we've really been seeing in this series is the human condition.

That's why we can relate to the emotions embedded in the text.

**This isn't our story. But...**

**[NOTE] Israel's story serves as a mirror to our own hearts.**

It confronts us with deep spiritual questions...

Questions like:

- *Do I trust that the LORD knows what He's doing and that He's in control?*
- *Do I trust His character, even when I'm not sure what's coming next?*

And maybe the most difficult question that comes from the text:

- *If we were to pass before the LORD, what would He say?*

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 1:12-13; 2:1

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 2:35, 7:3, 12:20

<sup>3</sup> 1 Samuel 4:13; 13:7

That's not a question meant to make us feel condemned.

It's also not meant to make us think we just need to do better with our lives.

We're not judged by appearance or performance.

The LORD judges the *motivations* of our heart.

**[NOTE]** But if God is looking at the heart, what *kind* of heart is He looking for?

James summarizes this nicely. He says:

**[SLIDE 16] James 1:27 - Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.**

Don't look at this like a religious, moral checklist.

This is more of a litmus test of the heart.

It's showing us what a heart that belongs to God actually looks like.

It's one that loves others.

In the first century Greco-Roman world, orphans and widows were the most vulnerable people in society. They lacked family protection and economic security. It would have been incredibly difficult for them to survive without help.

That's why James says "religion" that God accepts is the kind of heart that cares so much for the needs of others, that they're willing to step in and help.

And — **[NOTE]** that word "**religion**" in the Greek means "**worship**."

In other words:

When we're going beyond ourselves, loving others with the kind of heart that reflects Jesus, that's actually how we *worship* Him.

In the book of Romans, Paul calls these kinds of acts our spiritual acts of worship.<sup>4</sup> And in Matthew, Jesus said that whatever we do for one of the least of these, we do for Him.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 12:1-2

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 25:40

Again, it's all about having a heart of worship.  
That's what it means to be a people after God's own heart.

And that's the kind of heart God saw in David.  
Not a perfect heart — David will fail many times.  
But a heart that trusted the LORD and kept turning back to Him.

### **And that's where this story leads us.**

Because what we've seen from the beginning of 1 Samuel through our passage today in chapter 16:

**[NOTE] [SLIDE 17] God moves His story forward through people who trust Him.**

Like Samuel, sometimes we grieve the past while God is already preparing the future. Samuel was mourning Saul, but God was already preparing David.

And sometimes we grieve what we think has failed.  
—while at the same time, God is already raising up something new.

And so the main question for us is this:

**[NOTE] Will we let our fears and failures keep us stuck in that moment — or will we trust God with what comes next?**

Will we hear Him when He says:  
*“How long are you going to stay in this moment?  
Because I've got something planned for you.”*

We can rest in this truth...

Even when we can't see a way forward, God is still moving His story forward.  
And He invites us to trust Him along the way.

**Let's Pray**