

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 SAMUEL 8-11

Of all people, Americans should understand it was not a good idea for Israel to appoint a king. America was born out of outrage over the King of England's abuse of power. Author Walt Whitman sums our country's origins, "For many a promise sworn by royal lips and broken and laughed at in the breaking... the blows struck revenge... heads of the nobles fell... people scorned the ferocity of kings."

People do eventually scorn the ferocity of kings.

Israel though, wanted to be like their neighbor nations. They wanted a king and all that comes with one: *a throne, a crown, a scepter, a court, a coronation, some pomp and circumstance*. Rather than have faith in the invisible God, the Hebrews wanted a visible ruler on which they could fix their aspirations and hopes.

On the field of battle - while facing the enemy – the Israelis assumed it would be easier to rally around a leader they could see with their eyes, than to trust God.

From the outset *God* wanted to be Israel's king. His ideal form of government was a *theocracy* - not a *monarchy*. But Israel ignored God's warning about "*the ferocity of kings*", and persisted in their demand for a *king made of clay*. Finally, God gave in, and gave them a king. A king they would regret again and again.

Chapter 8 begins, "Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his

firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.” What happened to Eli befell Samuel – his sons became sleaze balls. They were judges, but they were doing more to *subvert justice* than to *uphold it*.

Why it happened, we’re not told?

It was said of Eli “his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.” Eli failed to discipline his sons... It could be that Samuel neglected his sons.

Remember the end of chapter 7 tells us that Samuel was a circuit preacher. His ministry looped through four cities. Apparently, travel was part of his job. It could be Samuel failed to spend as much time with his sons as was necessary.

I love this quote by Wade Horn, “My father was a great dad. I didn’t always think so, of course. When I was growing up, I mostly thought of him as an overbearing, autocratic, stick-in-the-mud whose main mission in life was to make mine miserable. But I have since come to realize he had one great quality. He was there. Someone once said 90% of life was just showing up. My dad showed up...”

I look back on any good I’ve done for my kids and I now realize what made the greatest impact was not my Father-knows-best-wisdom, or my cleverness, or my coolness... *I’ve just stayed in the mix. I’ve tried to be involved. I’ve been there.*

Don’t make the mistake in thinking your kids come with a pause button. You can push pause – go out, do your own thing – then return, re-hit the button, and pick up where you

left off. It doesn't work that way. Kids spell *love*, T-I-M-E.

Now that's assuming Samuel made any mistakes at all. *Why is it we jump to the conclusion that because a child ended up a rotten apple the parents must've done a horrible job?* Apply that logic, then what are going to say about God?

God was the perfect parent, yet Adam and Eve still rebelled against Him.

Every human is a free agent. He or she has the right to choose which team they'll play on. *Holiness isn't hereditary. Godliness isn't genetic.* Parents can provide their kids a great start, but it's up to the child to make right choices.

Why it happened we're not sure, but Samuel's sons ended up more crooks than judges – *and they became Israel's excuse to demand a king...*

“Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, “Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” Samuel's sons were an excuse. Israel's desire predated Samuel. Remember, they wanted to crown Gideon.

Their real motive is in verse 5, *“make us a king to judge us like all the nations.”*

Famous Bible commentator, G. Campbell Morgan, calls this, *“the supreme wrong”*. He writes, *“Israel had been chosen to be unlike the nations, a people directly governed by God.”* The word *“Israel”* means *“governed by God.”*

God called Israel to be holy - to march to a different

drummer. They were to keep in cadence with the will and wisdom of God. Instead the Hebrews utter the familiar refrain every parent has heard, *“Everybody else is doing I - why can't I?”*

Verse 6 *“But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” So Samuel prayed to the LORD. And God reveals to Samuel Israel’s root problem, “Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.”* The people’s request for a king had nothing to do with Samuel – or his sons. Trust and obey – was too straightforward. A monarchy provided more options.

You can hide stuff from a visible king who can’t read your mind and heart.

A king’s judgments can be debated and amended - God’s laws are absolute.

A king and his court can be manipulated, and favors gained. God is just.

Israel wanted *a system to follow* - rather than *a relationship to maintain*.

So the people swapped trust and obey - for a chain of command, and the play of politics, and rights of succession. They rejected God for human government.

In verse 8, Samuel is told that Israel is now treating him in the same manner they’ve treated God. *“According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day - with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods - so they are doing to you*

also.

Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them." God is going to comply with their request, but not before He warns about "the ferocity of kings"...

Israel will get their monarchy, but here's what they have to look forward to...

"So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. And he said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you:

He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers."

Understand, the evil of big government is about to enter Israel.

While God was king, government was simple and streamlined. God would appoint a judge from time to time, but generally speaking He was enough.

But with any form of human government expect bureaucracy... *and lots of it*. Instead of the king serving the citizens - citizens will be needed to serve the king.

And that's not all... God doesn't need to eat, or pay rent, or

entertain foreign heads of state, or pay back his supporters for their political support.

The ferocity of kings includes taxes... “And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants.

And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants.” The king you crave will be a ball and chain.

“And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day.” Before you know it Israel will want to throw tea in the harbor - but they’ll have to live with their king.

As the saying goes, “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

History records the reign of very few benevolent dictators. It’s difficult for even a good man to handle the power and authority afforded a king.

Over the next 500 years, of the 42 kings who’ll rule over both the northern and southern Hebrew kingdoms, only 9 will earn a positive approval rating from God.

Remember Israel’s mistake – he wanted to be “like all the nations.” Peer pressure was Israel’s downfall. The Israelis wanted to be like the Joneses.

Hey, as I tell my kids, if your friends stick their heads in the oven and bake their brains does that mean you should do the same? *No way!* If God forbids it - there’s a good reason it’s

forbidden. Israel will have to learn that lesson the hard way.

God doesn't want us to go with the flow of this world. He wants our lives to draw a contrast. We're to be governed by God – *not winging it on our own*.

God wants us to be loyal to our covenant, and different in our approach to life.

We need the gumption to stand up, and stick out for Jesus! Following God is trusting that His way is best - *even when no one else in the room thinks so*.

But Israel rejects the *faithfulness of God* and chooses the *ferocity of kings*.

Vs 19 “Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD. So the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed their voice, and make them a king." And Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Every man go to his city."

Chapter 9 begins, “There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.” Kish was a wealthy landowner, and a man of clout in the land of Israel. “And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.”

Scan the crowd and you could always spot Saul - he was always head and shoulders above everyone else. If NBA basketball had been around in Saul's day he would've made millions. Then he could've parlayed his stardom into a movie career... because he was also "choice and handsome". In fact we're told, "There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel."

Saul was literally, *tall, dark, and handsome*. Imagine him with a leading man's looks, and an NBA center's height. *He was a hunk who could dunk.*

And of course, if Saul played in the NBA his team would've been the Kings.

Here are a few other potential NBA players – Delilah would've played on the Clippers – Balaam the Wizards – Nicodemus the Knicks – John the Baptist the Grizzlies - since Peter and John were fishermen, they would've played for the Nets.

Verse 3 "Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. And Kish said to his son Saul, "Please, take one of the servants with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys." Kish sends Saul on a round up. He needs to corral some lost donkeys.

"So he passed through the mountains of Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha, but they did not find them. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, and they were not there. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find them." Saul and his servant canvass the whole countryside – they'd journeyed 100 miles or more – but

still... *no donkeys*.

“When they had come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, “Come, let us return, lest my father cease caring about the donkeys and become worried about us.” Notice, Saul is willing to stop short of the Father’s will and give up. Sadly, this will be a reoccurring tendency the rest of his life.

“And (the servant) said to him, “Look now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he says surely comes to pass. So let us go there; perhaps he can show us the way that we should go.”

Then Saul said to his servant, “But look, if we go, what shall we bring the man?” As a love offering - a man of God would never charge for services, but it would be appropriate not to thank him in some way. “For the bread in our vessels is all gone, and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?”

And the servant answered Saul again and said, “Look, I have here at hand one fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give that to the man of God, to tell us our way.” (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: “Come, let us go to the seer”; for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.)

A “seer” was a mystic. He was a person who could see into the spiritual realm. God would give him glimpses into the world of angels and the supernatural.

“Then Saul said to his servant, “Well said; come, let us go.” So they went to the city where the man of God was. As they

went up the hill to the city, they met some young women going out to draw water, and said to them, "Is the seer here?"

If they had been into puns they could've said... **Can we see the seer?**

Saul bumps into a group – *but notice what kind?* “**some young women**”. Jewish legend suggests the women wanted to talk to Saul because he was so handsome.

Apparently, the girls slow Saul down. He needs to speed it up. Verse 12 “**And they answered them and said, "Yes, there he is, just ahead of you. Hurry now; for today he came to this city, because there is a sacrifice of the people today on the high place. As soon as you come into the city, you will surely find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat.**

Now therefore, go up, for about this time you will find him." So they went up to the city. As they were coming into the city, there was Samuel, coming out toward them on his way up to **the high place.**” Hey, it just so happened, Saul and Samuel end up in the same city on the same day... *it was a miracle of God's providence.* Samuel's circuit and Saul's servant combined to produce a divine appointment.

One other point, Samuel was headed to the high place to oversee the sacrifice.

High places were elevated altars usually associated with idolatry. When Israel entered the land they were prohibited. Sacrifices were offered at the Tabernacle.

But according to Jeremiah 7:12 when the Ark was stolen by the Philistines, the Tabernacle in Shiloh was destroyed. That's why the Ark was kept in Kirath Jearim until the Temple was built. While the Tabernacle was out of order - evidently God allowed sacrifices on these high places - as long as a Levitical priest supervised.

This is what Samuel was going to do – when he crossed paths with Saul.

Verse 15 “Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, "Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to me." Here's a biblical episode of 24 hours.

God tells Samuel that tomorrow he'll meet a man from the land of Benjamin. Exactly 24 hours later he bumps into a sheep-less “Saul”. *It was a God thing!*

And when Samuel sees Saul the Lord speaks to him in verse 17, "There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people."

Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, "Please tell me, where is the seer's house?" It was their first encounter... “And Samuel answered Saul and said, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and tomorrow I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart.

But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do

not be anxious about them, for they have been found.” Samuel sees what’s troubling Saul and puts his mind to rest. Then he announces, “And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you and on all your father's house?” Samuel is excited. God has tagged Saul to be king and satisfy Israel’s desire. Saul will rally the nation to defeat the Philistines.

You would expect Saul to be honored – and to accept God’s calling - but look at his reaction in verse 21, “And Saul answered and said, “Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?”

At first glance it appears Saul is being humble, *but I’m not so sure*. Humility and insecurity look a lot alike - but they’re two very different animals...

Humility is an others-centered attitude. I care so much about you I don’t worry about me. But insecurity is the ultimate form of selfishness. I’m so concerned about my image I’m afraid to step up lest I fail and embarrass myself. Later we’ll see plenty of reasons to believe Saul was far more insecure than really humble.

“Now Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall, and had them sit in the place of honor among those who were invited; there were about 30 persons. And Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion which I gave you, of which I said to you, 'Set it apart.' " So the cook took up the thigh with its upper part and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, "Here it is, what was kept back. It was set apart for you.

Eat; for until this time it has been kept for you, since I said I invited the people." So Saul ate with Samuel that day." It was a meal fit for a king.

"When they had come down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the top of the house." It was night time. Finally, they called it a day.

"They arose early; and it was about the dawning of the day that Samuel called to Saul on the top of the house, saying, "Get up, that I may send you on your way."

I don't want to insinuate too much - but here's another character flaw - *Saul overslept*. He lacked godly motivation. You'd think he'd want to rise early and spend as much time with Samuel as possible - *but Samuel had to wake him...*

"Saul arose, and both of them went outside, he and Samuel. As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to go on ahead of us." And he went on. "But you stand here awhile, that I may announce to you the word of God." A private coronation of the first king of Israel will follow....

Chapter 10, "Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said: "Is it not because the LORD has anointed you commander over His inheritance?" Samuel commissions the king by pouring out a flask of oil on his head. The High Priest was also anointed with oil. Olive oil was a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The king would need the Spirit's wisdom and power and presence.

Saul was the first of many kings who will be crowned with the anointing of oil.

If you've ever watched a championship football game – you've seen it happen.

After the outcome has been decided – the triumphant players sneak up behind the victorious coach - and dump a bucket-full of Gatorade on top of his head. He gets an anointing with Gatorade. The game isn't over, but it's already decided.

This is what the anointing of the Spirit means to us. When the Spirit of God comes upon us it instills confidence and boldness. Yes, battles are yet to be fought. The game isn't over... but the power of Spirit is sure to overcome.

The cure for insecurity is the pouring out of flask full of the Holy Spirit.

Next, Samuel gives Saul a series of signs that will confirm his appointment...

Remember, Samuel is working with an insecure person. He wants to prop up his confidence. He's trying to help Saul find his security and identity in God.

Verse 2 "When you have departed from me today, you will find two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you..."

'The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. And now your father has ceased caring about the donkeys and is worrying about you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?" Samuel is encouraging Saul - God will do for him what he can't do for himself. Without Saul's involvement what was lost has been found.

"Then you shall go on forward from there and come to the terebinth tree of Tabor. There three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. And they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall receive from their hands." God will feed you Saul if you simply trust Him.

"After that you shall come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is.

And it will happen, when you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying." An encounter with some praising prophets is a third proof of God's appointment.

And the fourth proof appears in verse 6, "Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man." The Holy Spirit will come upon Saul, and his heart will be turned upside down.

Here's an insecure person... Saul feels inferior... He's always worrying about how he stacks up to others. Suddenly, the Spirit of God will come upon Him and enrapture him in ecstatic praise. He'll forget about Himself in a tsunami of God's love, and power, and presence. Saul forgets about himself and rejoices in God.

Note the sequence of what happens to confirm God's

blessing on Saul - *what was lost is found - his hunger gets fed - he joins in God's praise* – and he's filled and transformed by *the Holy Spirit*. This is how God confirms His blessing on us.

Jesus saves lost donkeys, and returns us to our owner... without our effort.

Our spiritual hunger gets met. We're fed out of the abundance of another.

We're given a new song. A desire is born in us to join in God's praise.

And finally we're filled with the Holy Spirit. The end result is we're **"turned into another man."** Our focus is no longer on ourselves. We're caught up in God.

This is what turned *petrified Peter* into *power-packed Pete*. At the Feast of Pentecost, our High Priest, Jesus, poured out the Holy Spirit upon the infant church. And every man present that day was **"turned into another man."**

This is what we need today – an outpouring of the Spirit. The Spirit turns us from wimps to witnesses. He transforms us from flickers into flames. Ask the Lord to pour out the Spirit upon your life – not with an eye-dropper, but with a full flask.

Verse 7 **"And let it be, when these signs come to you, that you do as the occasion demands; for God is with you."** Notice, obedience to God is often a spontaneous act. Obedience to God is **"as the occasion demands"**.

God doesn't always give us our marching orders in advance. We need to stay flexible and open - ready to follow His still small voice as He chooses to direct.

“You shall go down before me to Gilgal; and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and make sacrifices of peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, till I come to you and show you what you should do.” In chapter 15 Saul’s refusal to wait on Samuel ends up his downfall... For now he’s willing to wait.

Verse 9 “So it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart; and all those signs came to pass that day.

When they came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him; then the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.”

“And it happened, when all who knew him formerly saw that he indeed prophesied among the prophets, that the people said to one another, "What is this that has come upon the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

The changes God worked in *Saul* were obvious to *all*. Everyone saw that he was a different man. That’s what happens when God transforms your life...

“Then a man from there answered and said, "But who is their father?"

Therefore it became a proverb: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" And when he had finished prophesying, he went to the high place.”

“Then Saul's uncle said to him and his servant, "Where did you go?" And he said, "To look for the donkeys. When we saw that they were nowhere to be found, we went to Samuel. And Saul's uncle said, "Tell me, please, what Samuel said to you."

So Saul said to his uncle, "He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found." But notice what he doesn't tell him. Saul leaves out the important stuff...

"But about the matter of the kingdom, he did not tell him what Samuel had said." Again, chalk it up to Saul's insecurities. He won't believe God really wants to use him. Even after multiple confirmations, he's still hesitant to trust in God.

Saul's attitude is a false humility. Often we act humble to cover up our unbelief. It's easier to say, "O, God can't use the likes of me" - than it is to step out in faith.

In verse 17 Samuel calls the nation to Mizpah for a public presentation of their king... "Then Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah, and said to the children of Israel, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you.'

"But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, 'No, set a king over us!' Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans." And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was chosen. And Saul the son of Kish was chosen. But when they sought him, he could not be found." They go through the 12 tribes... the families of Benjamin... then the sons of Kish...

God marks Saul as king, and he's nowhere to be found... And recall too-tall-Saul wasn't an easy guy to miss. He stood head and shoulders over the crowd.

"Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, "Has the man come here yet?" And the LORD answered, "There he is, hidden among the equipment."

Saul is hiding from the call of God. Rather than taking a step of faith – and trusting God to lead and empower Him – Saul is shrinking back from the start.

As I said earlier, humility and insecurity are two very different animals...

True humility is aware of its inadequacies - but it trusts in God, and rises up in the power of God to do what God has appointed. God prepared Saul for this day by changing his heart - by making him a new man. But it's possible for God to change a man - and that man fail *to act on the fact* that he's been changed.

Sadly, this is what happens to believers today. We allow our fears and insecurities to slip back in, and keep us from being what God intended.

Saul failed to walk in the blessings God had granted him.

During World War 1 a munitions factory had a huge banner hung across its entrance. Emblazoned on the sign were the letters, "I A D O M". One day a visitor entered the factory, and noticed the sign. It was everywhere – on the doors - on the walls - in the halls. Finally, he asked a supervisor what the letters meant.

The company supervisor explained, “It’s an acrostic for the phrase, “*It All Depends On Me*”. This was their motto. This was also Saul’s motto.

Saul ignored the work God had done in his heart. He relied on his own talents and attributes. This is why his insecurities resurfaced and paralyzed his efforts.

Here his fears cause him to hide... Finally they retrieve their uncertain king.

Verse 23 “So they ran and brought him from there; and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.

And Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen, that there is no one like him among all the people?"

So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!"

Again Samuel mentions Saul’s natural advantages, but Saul knows he isn’t *tall enough* to rise to the challenges he’ll face. He was *tall in stature*, but *short on faith*.

Saul was an interesting character - a *physical giant*, but a *spiritual midget*.

Shakespeare described King Lear by saying, “*Ay, every inch a king.*” That’s the conclusion you would’ve drawn, if you’d simply looked at Saul. He looked so kingly.

But looks can be deceptive. Saul had potential for greatness, but it was lost in his unbelief. Rather than trust God he’d shrink back and act on his own impulses.

Saul had a problem many of us share. He was **externally**

motivated. Saul was a reactionary who lived for other people's approval. Circumstances and opinions dictated his behavior. To Saul *perception* was more important than *principle*.

This was no doubt rooted in his insecurities. Saul had no internal compass, so his only way to feel good about himself was to please the whims of other people.

Hey God wanted Saul - and He wants us - to be **internally-motivated.** God wants us guided by conviction - and virtue - and spiritual, heart-felt truth.

Before his coronation Saul was afraid and fearful of people. His insecurities caused him to appear humble, but when he gained some success, and notoriety, he became enslaved to the attention, and tried to hold it at all costs. Saul was the same *before and after* – *image was everything*. When he lacked power he was fearful to assume it. When he possessed it he was fearful of letting it go.

You may be like Saul. You've been called to step up - instead you've shrunk back. You're hiding among the stuff, while God wants you to step out for Him.

You need to be filled with the Spirit - then act on the fact - and walk by faith.

It's ironic, but Saul was a microcosm of the nation as a whole.

It's been said, "A people usually get the leaders they deserve." An article in the US News put it this way, "We look on our leaders and despair, but our leaders are really ourselves." In other words, we select leaders that mirror our

deficiencies.

Israel wanted a king because they were focused on the practices of neighbor *nations*. God gave them a king who was focused on other people's *notions*.

Verse 25 “Then Samuel explained to the people the behavior of royalty...” In Deuteronomy 17:14-20 Moses had given instructions to the kings before their existence. He told them not to accumulate horses, wives, and gold and silver.

God knew all three – *Broncos, babes, and bucks* – would lead the king astray.

He would look to the cavalry to win battles not God. Lust for girls would replace a love for God. He'd rest on his savings account rather depend on God's help.

I'm sure Samuel's instructions included Deuteronomy 17 *plus some...*

We're told he “wrote it in a book and laid it up before the LORD.” *Samuel* wrote a *manual* on royal behavior. He recorded kingly dos and don'ts. It was certainly important. But apparently, God didn't choose to include it in the Bible.

“And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.

And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and valiant men went with him, whose hearts God had touched. But some rebels said, "How can this man save us?" So they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.”

The first real test of Saul's administration occurs in chapter

11. “Then Nahash the Ammonite came up and encamped against Jabesh Gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, “Make a covenant with us, and we will serve you.”

Jabesh Gilead was an Israelite city east of the Jordan River – and vulnerable to these kinds of attacks. They want to make peace with the Ammonites.

“And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, “On this condition I will make a covenant with you, that I may put out all your right eyes, and bring reproach on all Israel.” Peace for an eyeball is a steep price. *I don’t think I could see to do that.*

The right eye was chosen because its loss would immobilize them for battle. In ancient times the left eye was covered by a shield, and the right eye focused on the opponent. Without a right eye the average man couldn’t fight.

Verse 3 “Then the elders of Jabesh said to him, “Hold off for 7 days, that we may send messengers to all the territory of Israel. And then, if there is no one to save us, we will come out to you.” He’s honest. *Your offer is not our first option. Give us a week...* “So the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and told the news in the hearing of the people. And all the people lifted up their voices and wept.

Now there was Saul, coming behind the herd from the field; and Saul said, “What troubles the people, that they weep?” And they told him the words of the men of Jabesh. Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard this news, and his anger was greatly aroused.” He cares for his people. He acts like a king.

“So he took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent

them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not go out with Saul and Samuel to battle, so it shall be done to his oxen."

And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent. When he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were 300,000, and the men of Judah 30,000." Large numbers of Israelis rallied around Saul.

"And they said to the messengers who came, "Thus you shall say to the men of Jabesh Gilead: 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have help.' " Then the messengers came and reported it to the men of Jabesh, and they were glad."

Therefore the men of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you may do with us whatever seems good to you." They pose a fake surrender.

"So it was, on the next day, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch, and killed Ammonites until the heat of the day. And it happened that those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together." The Ammonites were trounced.

Saul's approval rating goes through the roof. His popularity sweeps the nation. Israel has a king and he's victorious. That's when someone remembers the rebels who opposed Saul in chapter 10 - "Who is he who said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, that we may put them to death." How dare they oppose our king!

"But Saul said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for

today the LORD has accomplished salvation in Israel." Saul wants nothing to overshadow God's deliverance. This is a true humility, that's sadly seldom repeated in Saul's life.

An older and jealous Saul will not treat David with the same graciousness.

"Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there." So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they made sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly."

No one really knows it at the time, but this is Saul's finest hour. The rest of Saul's story goes downhill from here. Never again will he act this honorably.