

## **BIG WORD: 1 Samuel**

Homework for Chapters 13—15  
Discussion Dates: 28 March 2012 (in house)  
and 29 March 2012 (online)

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### **DAY ONE: Overview**

PRAY for the Holy Spirit to clear your mind so that you may focus on God's Word without distractions or preconceptions. Ask Him to help you discern only what He wants for you in this reading and for this day.

READ: 1 Samuel 13—15.

If possible, read all three chapters in one sitting. Make notes of any details that stick out to you, questions that rise and/or personal insights God gives you while you read.

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### **DAY TWO: The Shaping of an Army**

After Saul's battle against the Ammonites in chapter 11, the Israelites affirmed his kingdom. Samuel had warned them that a king would take their sons and daughters and build armies for himself. The time for that has come.

The beginning of chapter 13 is tricky because of a hole in translation. The original manuscripts, both in Hebrew and Greek (the Septuagint), do not include a number. Literally translated, they say "*Saul was ... years old when he began to reign, and he reigned ... and two years over Israel.*" (NET)

Because of this, we cannot know precisely how close chronologically the events of chapter 13 follow the events of chapter 12.

Those aren't the only holes, either. Nothing is said about military hierarchy or future plans. No reason is provided for Saul's actions or decisions. An army takes shape, but the details are unclear. Let's just look at what we do know.

READ 1 Samuel 13:1—2.

How many soldiers were with Saul? Where were they stationed?

How many men were with Jonathan? Where were they stationed?

Where was everyone else?

In the battle against the Ammonites in chapter 11, all of Israel came to fight. According to Scripture, that included 330,000 (11:8). Why do you think Saul kept only three thousand?

READ 1 Samuel 13:3—7.

Who conquered Geba?

Who took credit for it?

How did the Philistines respond?

How did the Israelites respond?

### **DAY THREE: Saul's Unlawful Sacrifice**

READ 1 Samuel 13:8—14.

We've seen the city of Gilgal mentioned many times before. Consult Joshua 4—5; Judges 1:1—5; 1 Samuel 10:8 and 11:14. Do you recognize a thematic significance of this place?

Here in 1 Samuel 13 Saul was told to wait in Gilgal again. What do you think he expected?

How long did Saul wait for Samuel?

While waiting for the prophet to come, Saul watched his army dwindle to a mere 600 men. That's an 80% decrease from what it was before the battle of Geba and a whopping 99.9% drop from what they had when they defended Gilead! Fearing further desertion (and clearly not trusting God), he took matters into his own hands.

What sins did Saul commit by doing this?

What did Samuel say would be his punishment?

How did Saul respond to Samuel's proclamation?

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#### **DAY FOUR: War Tactics**

READ 1 Samuel 13:15—14:52.

What did the Israelites have in their favor?

What did the Philistines have in their favor?

Jonathan goes “rogue” with his devoted armor-bearer. He employs a “fleeing” technique to determine God's leading in their specific situation, fully trusting God for the outcome. What happens when he obeys?

What is the reaction of Saul and the rest of the army?

Clearly Jonathan's obedience has no affect on his father's faith. Saul, still fearful and a bit panicky, makes a very rash command and vow. He forbids the soldiers from eating anything and then promises to kill anyone who disobeys. This is a very odd approach to take in war, one that, predictably, didn't work well. His soldiers, nearly starved, were weakened and likely pushed into sin. His son and only apparent leader inadvertently disobeyed the command. This, then, puts Saul in a very awkward position.

This whole story of a ridiculous vow is reflective of a couple situations we studied in Judges. In Judges 11:29—40 Jephthah made a thoughtless vow that had dire consequences for his only daughter. In Judges 17 we read about Micah and his mother. After making a severe vow, his mother tried to reverse the effects with over-the-top blessings.

Saul, however, took a different approach. Rather than negating the command or attempting to reverse the vow, Saul heartily agrees to the death of his son, his heir. This he does even after all the good Jonathan has done for the nation!

What is the response of the people?

How do you think father and son felt about all of this? What implications would this have on their relationship?

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#### **DAY FIVE: Here we go again.**

This is not the Israelites' first war with the Philistines. Back in chapters 4—6, we read about previous encounters with this enemy. At that time, Israel was ruled by God and by priests and judges. Here (13:1—14) Israel is ruled by their first earthly king, Saul. Use the following questions to compare these two wars.

How did the Israelites approach battle? What was their attitude or level of confidence?

What part did faith play in their tactics and confidence?

What were the outcomes of each instance?

This also is not the first time Israel has been the underdog coming against a mighty foe. Gideon fought against Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna with an army half the size of Saul's.

READ Judges 7:1—8:21 to see what God did with only 300 men.

Gideon, while clearly not perfect, aligned himself with God. He may have been reluctant, but he eventually obeyed God. He placed his trust in God. As a result, he was given victory.

According to 1 Samuel 14:52, with whom did Saul align? In whom did he place his trust?

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## **DAY SIX: Saul vs. Jonathan**

These chapters seem to juxtapose Saul and his son Jonathan. Here are some basic facts.

- Saul's name means "prayed for."
- Jonathan's name means "gift of Jehovah."

- Saul was the son of Kish, though we know not if he was the firstborn or only child.
- Jonathan was the firstborn of Saul, the oldest of at four sons and two daughters. He also had two half-brothers by way of his father's concubine.

Names and birth orders are interesting and I do believe they play a part in forming personhood, but the eventual character boasts exponentially greater significance. Based on what we learn from chapters 13—14, let's compare the two.

How would you describe the individual characters of these men?

What were solid strengths of each?

Can you define their greatest weaknesses?

How would you describe each man's relationship with or attitude toward God?

How do you think all these various components affected their relationship as father and son? As king and assumed heir?

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## **DAY SEVEN: The Last Straw**

READ 1 Samuel 15.

At the beginning of chapter 15 Samuel, instructed by God, gives new orders to Saul. He is to destroy the Amalekites and all they possessed.

The Amalekites were direct descendants of Esau (Genesis 36:12), but what did they do? And who were the Kenites?

READ Genesis 17:8—16, Deuteronomy 25:17—19 and Numbers 24:20—21.

Saul did not fully obey God's instructions. In what way(s) did he fall short?

When Samuel charged Saul with disobedience, how did Saul react? What observations can you make about his attitude? His sense of responsibility? His beliefs about leadership, both of God and himself as king?

What were the consequences?

Which character most reflects you? Saul, Jonathan or Samuel? How so?

Which character do you most want to resemble? How? Why?