

# small group discussion

## Faithfulness: the Life of Samuel

For the sermon on October 11-12, 2014

“Troubled Waters”

### Get Acquainted

When is the last time a poor decision cost you something? What happened?

### Get Started

What resonated with you most as you listened to this week’s sermon? What was the single most compelling or impactful thing you heard?

### Background to the Story | 1 Samuel 8-12

In spite of Samuel’s warnings to the Israelites’ demand for a king, God instructs Samuel to anoint Saul as Israel’s first king. Saul is a tall, good-looking man who is welcomed with shouts of, “Long live the king!” by his fellow countrymen at an inauguration ceremony.

As Saul becomes established as the recognized king of Israel, Samuel humbly steps down after faithfully leading Israel his entire life. Samuel re-enters the scene when Saul makes some critical mistakes.

### Listen to the Story | 1 Samuel 13.1-14

- **Option 1:** The small group leader tells the story accurately and passionately from memory. The group listens with Bibles closed.
- **Option 2:** Someone from the group reads the story while the group listens with Bibles closed.

### Tell the Story | 1 Samuel 13.1-14

- **Option 1:** Everyone gets a partner and retells the story to their partner from memory.
- **Option 2:** One or two people volunteer to retell the story to the group from memory.

### Read the Story | 1 Samuel 13.1-14

- Read the story with everyone following along in their copy of the text. Feel free to use another Bible version if you have read it before.

### Explore the Story

#### What do you see? What does this mean?

1. Who are the characters and what roles are being played in the story? What did they say and do?
2. Describe the tension in the story.
3. What choices are being made? What choices *could* be made? What are the outcomes of the choices?
4. What did you find compelling in this story?
5. What questions do you have? (Something you don’t understand or need more information about.)

## How does this story connect with *your* story?

### Fear

Saul is fearful as the Philistine army increases in size and his own army dwindles. Rather than waiting for Samuel as instructed, Saul is gripped by fear that leads him to offer a sacrifice. This was not his job or responsibility. It was the job of a priest. In a moment of fear, Saul took matters into his own hands.

Every day we are faced with some measure of fear. Some of these fears are not given to us by God. **This week's One Big Question is...In what area of your life are you tempted to live in fear?** How does this fear impact your decision making? What happens when we allow fear to influence or govern our decisions? How does fear impact your ability to trust God?

### Consequences

Samuel breaks the news to Saul that Saul's disobedience will cost him the kingdom. It's a troubling and harsh reality. God will not and cannot bless disobedience. You can choose your behavior, but you can't choose the consequences of your behavior. What pattern, habit, or behavior could capsize God's blessing and favor in your life? Depending on the nature of your answer, you may consider revealing it to a trusted friend or mentor rather than the whole group. Regardless, tell someone you trust who can help and encourage you to break this pattern before the consequences magnify. How can God's allowance of consequences be an act of love and mercy?

Read Galatians 5.16-25 together. There seems to be a choice of two paths we can take in life. One is a path of disobedience and living by our sinful nature. The other is a path of obedience and living by the Holy Spirit. How do you recognize when you're going the wrong way? What are the results of following that path of the sinful nature? What are the results of following the Holy Spirit? Which "Fruits of the Spirit" act in contrast to fear?

### Obedience

In two specific situations (1 Samuel 13 & 15), Saul disobeys God. In the second story, Saul was instructed to destroy the plunder after a battle. Instead, he (and his soldiers) kept the best of the plunder for themselves. When Saul made an excuse for his actions, Samuel harshly rebuked him. Read 1 Samuel 15.22-23 together. Put these verses in your own words. What's God's attitude toward rebellion and disobedience? How do we tend to rationalize our fears into actions or inactions?

Read John 14.15-24 together. When does God experience our love for him? How does that contrast with how we experience his love for us?

### Restoration

Read Psalm 51.16-17. What steps does God call us to take to get off the path of the sinful nature and onto the path of following him? What does God desire from you?

If you find yourself repeatedly acting in disobedience in a particular area of your life, this week seek out your small group leader, a church staff member, or trusted Christian friend and confess. This may be the first step off the path of ruin and onto the path of blessing.



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