

BIG WORD: 1 Samuel

Homework for Chapters 11—12

Discussion Dates: 14 March 2012 (in house)
and 15 March 2012 (online)

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 11—12.

If possible, read both 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.

DAY TWO: Allies & Treaties

The people of Jabesh Gilead seem stuck in the middle. When attacked by the Ammonites, the enemies of Israel, they offer them a treaty (1 Samuel 11:1), then run to Israel for deliverance. What do you think about this? What do you suspect were their motivations?

This is not the first time we meet the people of Jabesh Gilead. READ Joshua 9 to learn about another treaty they initiated. What does this story teach us about these people and their character?

How do you see the relationship between Israelites and those of Gilead?

Not only did the Gileads have an alliance with Israel, they also (by the time of Saul) had familial ties. READ Judges 21.

READ 1 Samuel 11:1—3. Clearly the Ammonites were aware of a connection between Gilead and the Israelites. How else would an attack on one people bring disgrace to another? But the people of Jabesh Gilead seem insecure. Why do you think that is?

DAY THREE: Saul Moved to Action

When Saul was first anointed as king, he reacted with insecurity and almost shame. He hid Samuel's words from his uncle (10:16) then hid himself from the people during Samuel's lot selection (10:22—23). Here we find him acting more like a farmer than a king.

READ 1 Samuel 10:9—11 and 11:6—7.

This Saul is quite different. What is the catalyst for change in him?

READ Judges 11:29; 14:5—6 and 15:14—15. All of these show examples of great strength endowed by the Spirit of God, just as with Saul when he tore the oxen as recorded in 1 Samuel 11:6—7.

The Spirit of God can give more than just supernatural strength. All throughout Judges the Spirit provides wisdom and anointing to judges (see 3:10, 6:34 and 11:29 for just a few examples). In Numbers 11 He gave elders under Moses the ability to prophesy.

Is there a difference between the Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit? Consider 1 Corinthians 2; John 14:15—17, 25—27; and Acts 2:1—4.

Think of a time when you've faced God's calling with timidity. Did anything cause a change in your perspective or approach? Describe that experience.

What truth about God can you cling to when you feel overwhelmed?

DAY FOUR: Battling the Ammonites

Upon notice of a threat by the Ammonites, Saul transforms. The people of Israel also change a bit. At Saul's coronation, they are divided, some even to the point of refusing him tribute (1 Samuel 10:26—17). In 11:7—8, however, the Israelites “turn out as one man.” What prompted this unity?

Let's back up a bit. In 1 Samuel 11:7 Saul cuts up oxen and sends them throughout the land. Remember Judges 19? (If not, go read Judges 19—20.) This event is quite similar!

Also, the battle between the Israelites and the Benjaminites in Judges 20 took place in Gibeah, the same town in which Saul lives. Coincidence? Is it possible the Spirit of God is using Saul to affirm his selection?

Being a son of Gibeah, Saul would have known their history; it was less than one hundred years' previous. His repetition of such action would remind the people of their history and need for a king. It would also lend to affirmation of his right to leadership.

READ 1 Samuel 11:9—13.

Whom did the people credit with their victory?

What action did they deem appropriate as a result?

Whom did Saul credit with their victory?

What action did Samuel deem appropriate as a result?

DAY FIVE: Samuel Holds Court

After their victory and unification under Saul, the Israelites held a great celebration (11:15). This confirmed Saul as their first earthly king. While everyone was gathered, Samuel chose to make a speech.

First Samuel asks the people to testify against him. What is his point?

Was it affirmed by the people?

Why is this relevant?

Similar to a lawyer arguing a legal case, Samuel stood as defendant first and now prosecutor. He *“confronts [them] with evidence ... as to all the righteous acts performed by the LORD.”* His evidence, taking the form of a history lesson, goes all the way back to Jacob's entrance to Egypt, nearly 900 years before. What are the major events he highlights?

Why do you think he chose these events and not others?

Are there any events of Israel's history you would have chosen to highlight that he skipped? Which ones? Why?

What point does Samuel make through this monologue?

What is the people's reaction?

DAY SIX: Judgment

READ 1 Samuel 12:12—18.

Verse 12 reveals a bit more of Israel's motivation for an earthly king. They were hemmed in with the Philistines on one side and the Ammonites on the other. Regardless of all the great things God had done for them over the past 900 years, they were afraid. They feared for their lives and were convinced that security would come in an earthly king.

Considering this, God's pre-existent stipulations for a king in the Law (Deuteronomy 17:14—20) and what Samuel says in 1 Samuel 12:14—15, what was the "evil thing" they did? Was it simply asking for a king or is there more to it?

Verse 19 tells the people's reaction to this miraculous, wrathful act of God. They sound repentant, but they dare not solicit forgiveness on their own. What request do they make of Samuel?

To whose God do they ascribe? What does this tell you about their faith?

DAY SEVEN: Forgiveness

READ 1 Samuel 12:20—25. What does this teach us about God's character?

As we have studied Judges and now the dawn of Israel's kings, we have seen them rebel and forget again and again. They're not so far removed from us, though, are they? We can be just as forgetful, just as fearful, just as repetitively sinful.

Between them and us stands only one major difference: Christ.

Jesus, the Messiah, provides grace through His innocent blood spilled on our behalf. He took our penalty so that we, sinful people, might be reconciled to a Holy God. His resurrection conquered death and by faith we can have eternal life.

Most of that seems to be in the afterlife. What impact, if any, does grace have on us in the day-to-day? How is our life different than that of the Israelites because of grace?

READ verse 24 again. What great things has God done for YOU? Make a list of His acts in your life and what they teach you about His character.