

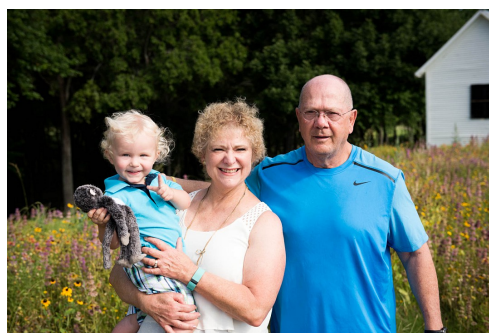
"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD RESTS ON SAUL" 1 Samuel 9:1 - 10:27

→ NIV MEMORY VERSE: 1 Samuel 10:6

The spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person.

Hello Friends. It is good to be among you once again. It's been about six months since I last stood before you with this Bible Study and much has been happening. Many of you have been so kind and expressed how you appreciate the lectures as they relate to my family. Honestly, I don't know how to consider the lessons of Scripture any other way. I feel that what the Lord teaches us is alive and relevant to each of our lives. That's why it's called a 'Living Word' and why we serve a Living Lord. Amen? I also feel that these lessons are merely an opportunity to sit and have a conversation with you collectively.

→ So, I thought I might share with you some of what I did over the summer. Our family had an opportunity to gather in Dallas in late June to celebrate the 40th birthday of our older son. (I am amazed at the thought of our son being 40! How did that happen?) And we took the opportunity to have some professional photos taken. This one is of my husband and me with our grandson Zayne, now 2 years old. While taking this shot our son and daughter in law revealed that Zayne is going to be a big brother, so grand baby #2 is coming in February. We are all very excited.



→ And here is the official Christmas card photo of our family this year. You can see that we're going to have lots of fun chasing around after Zayne. He is clearly a duplicate of his daddy.

If I were to summarize this lesson in simple terms, we have: Samuel, Saul, 2 donkeys, an anointing, and a pile of wagons and baggage. I believe we are all a little bit like Saul, even though God wants us to strive to be more like Samuel. However, God will use the "Saul" in each of us to help us become more like Samuel.

Let's ask Him to bless this lesson ... [The Big Debate?]

We begin with the prophet Samuel. God was able to use Samuel because he was genuinely dedicated to God.

Samuel moved ahead because he was listening to God's directions. Too often we ask God to control our lives without making us give up the goals for which we strive. Our habit is to ask God to help us get where we want to go. The first step in correcting this tendency is to turn over both the control and destination of our lives to Him. The second step is to do what we already know God requires of us. The third step is to listen for further direction from his Word - God's map for our life.

→ So doing things God's way involves:

1. Giving control to God,
2. Doing what He requires of us, and
3. Listening to direction from His Word. (That means you need to be reading His Word daily ... seriously.)

By contrast, we have Saul, God's choice for Israel's king. He was from the tribe of Benjamin, which had been nearly exterminated because of their rebellion against the law. Benjamin's territory lay between Ephraim and Judah, so Saul's tribe was adjacent to the royal tribe of Judah. In spite of what Saul said to Samuel in 9:21, he belonged to a powerful and wealthy family that owned real estate and animals and had servants.

Physically, Saul was tall, good-looking, and strong, the kind of king the people would admire. Even Samuel, with all his spiritual perception, got carried away when he saw him. Saul was obedient to his father Kish and concerned about his father's feelings, and he was persistent in wanting to obey in finding his father's lost animals suggests that he wasn't a quitter. There was a certain amount of modesty in Saul, but there was no indication of spiritual life.

From Saul we learn that while our strengths and abilities make us useful, it is our weaknesses that make us usable. Our skills and talents make us tools, but our failures and shortcomings remind us that we need a Craftsman in control of our lives. Whatever we accomplish on our own is only a hint of what God could do through our lives if we allowed it.



donkeys were evidence of that wealth.

→ Saul was sent by his father on an important mission - to find their stray donkeys. Donkeys were all-purpose animals, the 'pick up trucks' of Bible times. Used for transportation, hauling, and farming, they were considered necessities. Even the poorest of family owned one. To own many donkeys was a sign of wealth, and to lose them was a disaster. Saul's father Kish was wealthy, and his many

Often we think that events just happen to us, but as we learn from this story about Saul, God may use common occurrences to lead us where he wants us. It is important to evaluate all situations as potential 'divine appointments' designed to shape our lives. Think of all the good and bad circumstances that have afflicted you lately. Can you see God's purpose in them? Perhaps he is building a certain quality in you or leading you to serve him in a new area.

Saul's home was in Gilbeah, which was about 5 miles from Ramah where Samuel lived, and yet Saul didn't even know what all of Israel knew, that a man of God named Samuel lived in Ramah. How Saul could live so close to Israel's spiritual leader and not know about him is a bit of a mystery and suggests that Saul simply lived and farmed with his family at Gilbeah and minded his own business. Apparently he didn't attend the annual feasts and wasn't concerned about spiritual matters. Like many people today, he wasn't against religion, he just didn't make knowing the Lord a vital part of his life. It's a good thing the servant with Saul knew about Samuel and that Saul heeded his advice.

Since there was no central sanctuary in Israel at that time, the people brought their sacrifices to a shrine that was dedicated to the Lord and located on a hill near the city. The pagan nations worshipped their false gods at the high places and also indulged in filthy practices there, but the people of Israel were forbidden to join them.

The day before, the Lord told Samuel that Saul was coming to Ramah, so he was prepared to meet him and give him God's message. The Lord would use Saul as he did Samson, to begin to weaken the Philistines and prepare them for David's final conquest of this enemy of the Jews.

→ Early the next morning after their meeting, Samuel accompanied Saul and his servant to the edge of the city, sent the servant on ahead, and then anointed Saul as the first king of Israel. From that moment on, Saul was leader over God's people, but only Samuel and Saul knew it. Samuel gave Saul 3 signs, special occurrences he would encounter as he made his way home.



→ First, he would meet 2 men who would tell him that the lost animals have been found, news that Saul had already heard from Samuel. This was a good experience for the young king, for it assured him that God could solve his problems. One of Saul's greatest failures as a leader was his inability to take his hands off of situations and let God do the work. In modern language, Saul was a 'control freak'. Yet while Saul and his servant were dining with Samuel, God was already at work saving the lost animals.

→ The second sign would take place at the oak of Tabor where he would meet 3 pilgrims heading for Bethel. In spite of the nation's unbelief, there were still devoted people in the land who honored the Lord and sought his face. These men would greet Saul carrying 3 goats, 3 loaves of bread, and a skin of wine. The men were to give Saul two of the 3 loaves they were carrying, and he was to accept them. God was showing Saul that not only could He solve his problems, but He could also supply his needs. As the first king of Israel, he would have to raise up an army and provide the food and equipment the men needed, and he would have to depend on the Lord for this.

→ The third sign had to do with Spiritual power. Saul would meet a band of prophets returning from worship at the high place, and they would be prophesying. The Holy Spirit of God would come upon Saul at that time and he would join the company of prophets in their ecstatic worship. In this sign, God told Saul that He could endow him with the power he needed for service. However, later Saul would become very self-sufficient and rebellious, and the Lord would take the Spirit from him.

In the Old Testament era, God gave His Holy Spirit to chosen people to enable them to perform special tasks, and God could take the Spirit away as well. The Spirit enabled Saul to have a personal experience with the Lord and to express it in praise and worship. Had Saul continued to nurture his walk with the Lord, his life would have been much different. → His pride and desire for power became his constant and repeated sin.

When the news got out that Saul had prophesied with a company of prophets, some of his former friends spoke about him with disdain. There's no evidence that he was overly wicked, but clearly Saul was a secular person. He was the last man his friends ever expected to have that kind of experience. The question, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" was asked of anybody who suddenly stepped out of character and did the unexpected. Even after Saul was presented to the people as their king, not everybody in Israel was impressed with him.

Only the Lord and Samuel knew that the king had already been selected and anointed, but Samuel wanted the tribes to realize that Jehovah was in charge of the selection process. He had the tribes present themselves, and the tribe of Benjamin was selected. This may have been selection by lot to determine the Lord's will. Finally, the young man Saul was selected from the tribe of Benjamin. However, Saul could not be found!



→ Samuel had to inquire further of the Lord to discover that the new king was hiding among the wagons and baggage, certainly not an auspicious way to begin his reign! Was he hiding out of modesty or fear? Probably the latter, because true humility accepts God's will while at the same time depending on God's strength and wisdom. Andrew Murray said, "True humility isn't thinking meanly of one's self; it's simply not thinking of one's self at all."

Had Saul been focusing on the glory of God, he would have been present in the assembly and humbly accepting God's call. Then he would have urged the people to pray for him and to follow him as he sought to do the Lord's will.

Recently I thought of another perspective as to why Saul may have been hiding among the baggage when Samuel declared him the chosen king, a reason different from most Bible commentators. This week, in preparation for this lecture, I came to realize that God has sent ME on a journey to find two donkeys. I confess that for several years I also have been hiding among the baggage of my family, but for different reasons. I think that Saul may have realized

the character and nature of the Israelite people and he was in no hurry to be their leader. After all, if they would not accept the God of Israel, why would they accept him!

You understand that the search for the donkeys was nothing more than God's way of putting Saul on the road to being given a purpose ordained by God. Allow me to explain about my two donkeys and the journey I am on right now.

I have shared in the past that I am a child of divorced parents, and I have one younger brother. Our adolescence was spent living with our mother and having Sundays with our non-custodial dad. Dad was a godly man and the separation from his children and his home was emotionally difficult for him. Those Sundays were cherished days during those years, and those weekly visits with Dad served as the foundation of my spiritual life.

My brother and I lived as two halves of one family. My brother also struggled with learning disabilities, dyslexia and ADHD, that were not identified until he was in his 20's or 30's. He was simply labeled as "lazy" – and he is most of the time. On the other hand, I was labeled the "gifted" child and nothing less than perfection was demanded of me in all things by our mother. (I'm sure you're not surprised).

Our mother is an interesting person. She demands perfection from the world around her, yet she lives in denial to herself and her own shortcomings. In the 1970's she became a follower of the L. Ron Hubbard movement and joined the Church of Religious Science. In this area she and I simply agreed that we disagreed. Occasionally we experienced a conflict; an issue would arise where we could not compromise. This happened about every decade or so, and she would storm 'away' from our relationship, retaliating in hateful words. After a cooling off period, she would re-engage and act as though nothing had ever happened. There was no repentance and no resolution on the issue, only moving forward from there. So you can imagine the 'baggage' built up in the closet of our family over the years with no resolution to any of it. She refused to discuss it and we simply went forward from there, each and every time. That meant no ownership of actions and no apologies. ... Perhaps some of your families function similarly.

Eight years ago, following my son's wedding, my mother threw a fit because she felt she did not receive enough recognition as the grandmother of the groom and that not enough of the wedding photos included her. She proceeded to 'attack' the bride and her mother on this until my son and I intervened and told her privately that she was 'out of line.' A week later my mother sent me a letter with words no child of any age should receive from their parent. She accused us of 'elder abuse', changed the locks on her door, and told me she 'wished she had an abortion with me and that I didn't exist.' It was shocking and hurtful, the most hurtful words she's ever thrown at me. After much contemplation, I decided the best thing for me was to grant her wish – to give her life without a daughter. I decided that my best response would be silence and disassociation. In retaliation I was labeled an "ungrateful and disloyal daughter."

It would be six long years before I had any contact with my mother, and honestly, it was quite pleasant. I sent cards and gifts during those years, and I kept watch over her well being

through my brother and my uncle (her brother). Through them I helped with small monetary gifts when things were needed. I was aware that she fell a few times at home, cracking a rib against a wall or spraining an ankle. From a distance it was evident that she needed more and more help at home. At the same time my brother was experiencing the consequences of his life choices.

My brother chose a different life pathway from me in his younger years – substance abuse and all the baggage that comes with that. We know from the example of David and Bathsheba that you can cease your sin, but there are still the lingering consequences to pay ... and that's been the case with my brother; medically, physically, and financially. A few years ago my brother was without money and no place to live. Mother offered for him to move in with her until he was 'on his feet.' I thought it was a good plan; she was falling at home and he needed a place to live. The problem is that neither is wise and both blame everyone else around them for their weaknesses. What began as a six-month temporary arrangement has now been 4 years. That's the way things happen sometimes.

Well, 4 weeks ago my mother tripped and fell in a restaurant parking lot in Long Beach where they live. She fractured her left arm in several places requiring surgery the next day to place 2 plates, several pins, and a steel rod to rebuild the head of the radius (which snapped off in the fall). My brother called in a panic and in emergency, and I went. I knew that my mother needed my help and that my brother did not have the emotional skill set to deal with all the information gathering and decision making that would be required to navigate Medicare, Medi-cal, and the medical care of an 88 year old woman with her personality type! So I set off on the journey to look for 2 lost donkeys – my own mother and brother. ... This is a very relevant lesson, isn't it!

My mother has been from hospital care to skilled nursing care, and this week is being moved to a board & care home for the next 30 days or so. She will now need a caregiver to go home, 24/7 at first and later hopefully during the day while my brother works. So many investment prayers have been answered in this family relationship in recent weeks that it's overwhelming! From my perspective the hand of God is clearly evident in these details. My role is to focus on the tasks placed in front of me – bringing the donkeys home.

In the process of handling all these matters for my mother, I walked into her home for the first time in 8 years and saw the home of two hoarders! I see this as further confirmation of the emotional incapacities of my 2 donkeys. The overwhelming clutter in their home needs to be cleaned up before my mother can even consider coming home – and guess who is elected!

I can see now that I was "lying among the baggage," knowing that my coronation of being the leader of my family was going to happen. Am I really willing to do all this work? Do I want to do this? And if I don't do this, who else will? Perhaps when Saul was hiding among the baggage when Samuel was trying to conduct his coronation as the first King of Israel, because he was wrestling with whether or not he wanted to 'rule' such a people. Eventually, Saul did come forward and Samuel anointed him as King of Israel before the people.

→ The Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul in power and he was for that time a changed person. Throughout the Old Testament, God's Spirit would come upon a person temporarily so that God could use him or her for great acts. This was not always a permanent, abiding influence, but sometimes a temporary manifestation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave the person power to do what God asked, but it did not always produce the other fruits of the Spirit, such as self-control. Saul, in his early years as king, was a different person as a result of the Holy Spirit's work in him. But as Saul's power grew, so did his pride. After awhile he refused to seek God, the Spirit left him, and his good attitude melted away.



The first official act on the part of Saul suggests that there was indeed trouble ahead. Saul was a reluctant ruler who followed his emotions instead of building his faith. He would serve as a sacrificing courageous soldier one day and become a self-centered autocrat the next day. Shunning national popularity is one thing, but shunning God-given responsibility is quite another. Samuel did what he could to salvage an embarrassing situation. He presented Saul as God's chosen king, so the nation had to accept him, and he accented Saul's admirable physical characteristics. The people were impressed, but Samuel certainly knew that God didn't need tall, muscular men in order to get His work done. In a few years He would use teenage David to kill a giant!

→ The wisest thing Samuel did that day was to link the kingship with the divine covenant. Samuel no doubt elaborated on Moses' words from Deuteronomy and reminded the people that even the king had to submit to the Lord and His Word. There was one God, one nation, and one covenant, and the Lord was still in charge. [*Here is where we can be reminded in this Presidential election and the politics of our country.*]

One of the reasons Israel asked for a king was so the nation could unite behind one leader and have a better opportunity to face their enemies. The Lord condescended to reach down to their level of unbelief, and He gave them a king who looked like a natural warrior. How sad it is that God's people trusted a man of clay whom they could admire, and yet they would not trust the Lord who throughout the nation's history had proven Himself powerful on their behalf over and over. In His grace, God gave Saul an opportunity to prove himself and to consolidate his authority. Our account for next week begins with the battle with Nahash and the Ammonites.

One of Saul's great challenges was his lack of self-control, not just a lack of willpower but Biblical self-control.

→ I found online an article by Rick Warren at www.pastorrick.com called '**Developing Biblical Self-Control**'. Here are five ways to develop Biblical self-control:

→ **People with self-control master their moods.** They do not let their moods master them. Most of what gets done in the world is accomplished by people who do the right thing even when they don't feel like it: "A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls." (Proverbs 25:28, NLT)

→ **People with self-control watch their words.** They put their minds in gear before opening their mouths: "Be careful what you say and protect your life. A careless talker destroys himself." (Proverbs 13:3, TEV)

→ **People with self-control restrain their reactions.** How much can you take before you lose your cool? "If you are sensible, you will control your temper. When someone wrongs you, it is a great virtue to ignore it." (Proverbs 19:11, TEV)

→ **People with self-control stick to their schedule.** If you don't determine how you will spend your time, then others will decide for you: "Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:15-16, NIV)

→ **People with self-control manage their money.** They learn to live on less than what they make and they invest the difference. The value of a budget is that it tells your money where you want it to go rather than wondering where it went! "In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has." (Proverbs 21:20, NIV)

So – Who are the donkeys in your life?

Who have you been sent off to find and bring back home?

Are YOU ready and willing to serve when God calls you to His real purpose?

Will you recognize it when you see it?

Or will you be found among the baggage?

→ With regard to my two donkeys – I chose to respond to their need with grace and mercy. I rest in knowing that:

- God will solve our problems,
- Supply our needs, and
- Endow me with the power I need to serve.

And He will do the same for you ...