

UNLIKELY HEROES

"THE RIGHT RESPONSE"

1 SAMUEL 7:2-13

This Week's Core Competency

Worship – I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me. Psalm 95:1-7

- 1 Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
- 2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.
- 3 For the Lord is the great God,
the great King above all gods.
- 4 In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.
- 5 The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.
- 6 Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;
- 7 for he is our God and we are the people
of his pasture,
the flock under his care.

Our Core Competency this week is *worship*. If we are not careful, we will too narrowly define worship as nothing more than a personal or corporate act of singing songs. As significant an expression of worship as this is for the believer, it only scratches the surface of the depth and breadth of what defines a worship 'experience', believer or not. Fundamentally, worship is any expression of adoration or devotion given to that which we love most. Truth be told, we always make time, allocate

***Offer your bodies as living sacrifices,
holy and pleasing to God.***

– Romans 12:1

money and invest energy in the direction where our affections run deepest. Worship is an outflow of the affections of the heart. Essentially, anyone or anything can be an idol in our life if/when it begins to crowd out (much less eclipses!) our love for, joy in, satisfaction with or obedient devotion to the living God.

So what should you do if you are concerned that your affections are out of alignment with God's best for you? First, go before the Lord in prayer, asking him to reveal any idols that may be present in your life. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:23-24). Second, if the Lord reveals something to you: a relationship, a hobby, an expenditure, etc., confess it as such. Confession means "to agree with", so rest assured, you won't be sharing anything that God does not already know! "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Ps 51:4a; See also 1 John 1:9). Walk in repentance. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon" (Is 55:7).

Lastly, devote yourself daily to being a living sacrifice in honor of the matchless God who not only saved you from the penalty due your sin, but subsequently gave you "every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph 1:3). "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship" (Ro 12:1ff).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

1 Samuel 7:2-13

2 It was a long time, twenty years in all, that the ark remained at Kiriath Jearim, and all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the LORD. 3 And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." 4 So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.

5 Then Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah and I will intercede with the LORD for you." 6 When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel was leader of Israel at Mizpah.

7 When the Philistines heard that Israel had assembled at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines came up to attack them. And when the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid because of the Philistines. 8 They said to Samuel, "Do not stop crying out to the LORD our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines." 9 Then

Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it up as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD on Israel's behalf, and the LORD answered him.

10 While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. 11 The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Car. 12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far has the LORD helped us." 13 So the Philistines were subdued and did not invade Israelite territory again.

Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "twenty years" indicating *time* in v. 2.
- * Circle "the ark remained" in v. 2.
- * Draw an arrow from the first to the second circle.
- * Underline "the people. . . the Lord" in v. 2.
- * Highlight "if you . . . foreign gods" in v. 3
- * Identify numerically Samuel's requests to the Israelites in v. 3
- * Circle the word "if" and "then" indicating *conditionality* in v. 3.
- * Circle the word "so" indicating *response* in v. 4.
- * Underline "we have sinned against the Lord" in v. 6.
- * Highlight "He cried...answered him" in v. 9.
- * Box each occurrence of "Lord" in this passage.
- * Underline "the Lord...the Philistines" in v. 10.
- * Highlight "Throughout...the Philistines" in v. 13.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Summarize what Scripture reveals about Samuel from 1Sa 1-3 or consult a Bible Dictionary.
2. Verse 2 begins "*It was a long time, twenty years in all.*" Twenty years since what (See 1Sa 4-6)?
3. Over *what* was Israel mourning and seeking out the Lord? And why was this such a big deal?
4. Identify the conditions Samuel placed upon Israel if they were to receive God's favor.
5. How did Israel respond? Defend whether you believe their response to be sincere or not.
6. Identify Samuel's actions/involvement with his fellow Israelites. What do you surmise of his character?
7. Contrast the Israelites *and* the outcomes in 1Sa 4:1-4, 9-11 with vv. 10-12.
8. Identify the varying ways Israel, including Samuel, engaged in worship to God.
9. Why do we not participate in burnt offerings (i.e. animal sacrifices) as an act of worship today?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the many modern 'idols' (i.e., inordinate affections/practices) we risk embracing today. How might participation in these hinder our worship of and devotion to God?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The ministry of Samuel serves as a transitional 'bridge' between the rule of the judges to the request and subsequent establishment of an Israelite monarchy (1Sa 8:4ff). As such, perhaps a brief review of Samuel's life up to this point might be helpful. Samuel was the firstborn of the previously barren Hannah (1:5). Hannah vowed to "give him to the Lord" (v. 11). "In the course of time, Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, 'Because I asked the Lord for him'" (v. 20). After his weaning, Hannah fulfilled her vow by giving him to serve the Lord under the oversight and care of Eli the priest at the tabernacle in Shiloh (2:11; 3:1a). Years later, Samuel's first prophetic vision (3:11ff) pronounced an aforementioned demise (2:27ff) of Eli and his family's 'right' to serve as priests. From that moment on "all Israel...recognized that Samuel was [recognized] as a prophet of the Lord" (3:20-21).

1 Samuel 4-6 provides a brief excursus from the life/ministry of Samuel. However, the events that transpire in these three chapters are of vital importance to the roles Samuel plays ("prophet, priest and judge" - R. P. Gordon, *I & II Samuel*, 105-06) before Israel in today's passage. In chapter 4, amidst the "brash, misplaced confidence in outward symbols [i.e. the ark]" (Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 & 2 Samuel*, TOTC, 78), Israel was defeated by the Philistines who captured the "ark of God" to boot! (v.11). Adding insult to injury, Eli and both of his sons (Hophni and Phinehas) died as a result of the defeat (v. 11, 18). Soon after, Phinehas' grieving wife bore a son and named him Ichabod, meaning "the glory [i.e. the ark] has departed from Israel" (v. 21). Chapter 5 profiles the turmoil and death experienced by the Philistines while in possession of the ark of the covenant. Chapter 6 records the Philistines' efforts to both appease God for their initial capture of the ark and its return to Israel. The ark made it to Beth Shemesh - a city on the outskirts of Israelite-occupied land roughly twenty-four miles west of Jerusalem. Their unfortunate mishandling of the ark (v. 19) cost the lives of over fifty-thousand men (v. 19). Resultantly, nine miles west of Jerusalem, men residing in Kirjath Jearim "came and took up the ark...to Abinadab's house on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord" (7:1).

"4:1-7:1 stressed Yahweh's freedom and that his power cannot be controlled by Israel. Rather, they

had to submit to his will and align themselves with his purposes" (David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, APTC, 105). The time between v. 1 and v. 2 spanned twenty years." During this time, the tabernacle, Israel's center of worship prior to Solomon building a temple, remained in Shiloh. Shiloh was a mere twenty-five miles due north of Kirjath Jearim. In all this time no effort is recorded of the Israelites attempting to restore the ark, representing 'the glory of the Lord,' to its rightful place inside the tabernacle. In like manner, neither was Kirjath Jearim "turned into the seat of national worship. There is no word of sacrificial or other services being performed there. There is nothing to indicate that the annual feasts were held at this place. The ark had a resting place there - nothing more" (W. G. Blaikie, *The First Book of Samuel*, K & K, 85-86). Perhaps of greatest significance is the inability of the priests to perform their ceremonial rites each annual Day of Atonement (Lev 16) on behalf of Israel's corporate sins against Yahweh.

Regardless of how long "the people of Israel mourned and sought after the Lord" (i.e. weeks, months or years), the bottom line is that the timing for 'judicial' intervention was just right from God's perspective. One author states well the reason Samuel is called to resume his role as judge upon the Israelites. "Samuel is summoned by Yahweh to call Israel back to its primary loyalty, to its single reliance, and to shun other modes of life, security, and well-being. The demand of Samuel is that Israel belong only to Yahweh and not be permitted any other loyalty. The promise of Samuel is that Yahweh is completely adequate as a delivering God, who can work rescue in any circumstance, even with the Philistines. Samuel bears witness to the adequacy of Yahweh, even as he bears witness to the sovereignty of Yahweh" (Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, Interpretation, 49).

Samuel challenges the mourners to individual action, essentially saying, "If your repentance is sincere, then get rid of all of the idolatrous images, artifacts and allegiances from your heart, your mind and your house" (paraphrase of v. 3a). Given how deeply immersed the people were in the syncretism of pagan rituals and practices with authentic worship of Yahweh, this was no light-hearted request. Doing so would require a radical departure from their present way of living to live, serve and worship the one true living God alone. Perhaps this is why

Samuel includes the promise of God's sure deliverance of Israel from the ever-pressing Philistines (v. 3b).

Israel responds appropriately, setting the stage for a corporate response from Israel at Mizpah. Again, Samuel adds a thread of encouragement by promising to intercede, as would a priest, before the Lord on their behalf (v. 5). On this day, Israel worships God in various ways. They begin by fasting. Once assembled at Mizpah, they draw and pour out water as an outward sign of inward contrition. Then, as a people united by their repentance, the people cry out, "we have sinned against the Lord" (v. 6). God's response that soon follows indicates that, at least for the moment, their sorrow over their sin was sincere.

News travels fast. When the Philistines heard of Israel's assembly at Mizpah, they rushed into formation to mount an attack. In fear and humility—long-gone is Israel's pride and presumption that the mere presence of the ark would guarantee them victory (cf. 1Sa 4:3bff)—the people plead for Samuel's continued intercession before the Lord (v. 8). Samuel heartily obliges. Yet, sensing the rising intensity both upon and

surrounding Mizpah (it is no small irony that the common usage of the noun '*mizpah*' refers to a place of 'security' and/or 'protection'), Samuel extends his priestly service upon Israel by "taking a suckling lamb and offering it up as a whole burnt offering to the Lord" (v. 9). This served both to atone for (i.e. to cover) Israel's sin and symbolize their renewed and whole-hearted devotion to Yahweh.

Just when tensions are at their peak and timing is of desperate essence, the Lord responds to Samuel's actions with a thunderously loud crash down upon the Philistines - rattling their confidence to the core (v. 10). This resounding noise simultaneously serves as Israel's rally cry to pursue and exterminate the rapidly retreating Philistine army (v. 11). Samuel offers a fitting response to the intervening work of their mighty God. Between Mizpah and Shen he sets a stone to commemorate their God whose mercy, grace and love has 'thus far' preserved Israel as his covenant people. Even though ominous skies loom upon Israel's horizon, so long as Samuel is alive, the hand of the Lord remains against the dreaded Philistines (v. 13b).

The Message of the Passage

Right responses to God's word lead to authentic worship of him and divine favor from him.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following living questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 2 **Kiriath Jearim** "Originally Kiriath Jearim was named Baalah (Jos 15:9) or Kiriath Baal, probably indicative of its religious significance when the city belonged to Canaanites who worshiped Baal. After the Israelites had entered Canaan under Joshua's command, the town was allotted to the tribe of Judah, very close to the southern border of Benjamin (Jos 18:14). Kiriath Jearim, which means "city of forests," was strategically situated along an important route leading from the coastal plain to the Benjamin plateau and on to Jerusalem" (From article 'Kiriath Jearim' in the *Archaeological Study Bible*, 406).

v. 2 **mourned** "It is difficult to conceive of the whole nation lamenting after Yahweh for twenty years since Samuel needs to instruct them to remove their foreign gods. So the intent is probably to suggest that their lamentation was the result of the [twenty year] period" (Firth, 106).

v. 3 **Ashtoreths** "Ashtoreth was worshipped over a wide area as the goddess of fertility, love and war, and plaques of naked female figures from the Bronze and Iron Ages in Palestine are numerous. The Baals were the corresponding male deities. This depraved cult had become widespread at this period, involving Israel in breaking the first and second commandments, and resulting in loathsome sexual indulgence. The Canaanite way of life was totally opposed to everything Israel should have stood for as the people of God, and therefore repentance, if it was to be credible, had to entail renunciation of this foreign worship" (Baldwin, 78).

v. 3 **Philistines** "The Philistines, known in Egyptian texts as the "Sea Peoples," were Indo-Europeans who migrated from the Aegean Islands and Asia Minor to the eastern Mediterranean coastal region in the twelfth century B.C. Migrations had occurred earlier, for Abraham and Isaac had contact with the Philistines as early as the twentieth century B.C. With their aggressive invasions, and the fortress cities at Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza, the Philistines established strong political and military control of the southern coastal plain of Palestine. With their iron weapons, the Philistines became a significant threat to Israelite security" (**sn**, *Nelson NKJV Study Bible*, 457).

v. 5 **Mizpah** "The name Mizpah meant 'watchtower' - it was a vantage point for military purposes and was itself visible from a distance. The Philistines, hearing of the great gathering of Israelites, supposed an attack to be imminent and moved up to take the initiative in the battle. It was a testing moment for the Israelites, who had been defeated so decisively in the previous encounter (1Sa 4:10-11)" (Baldwin, 79).

v. 6 **Samuel** "The last judge, first kingmaker, priest and prophet who linked the period of the judges with the monarchy ([from] about 1066-1000 B.C.). Jeremiah regarded Samuel and Moses as the two great intercessors of Israel (Jer 15:1). Samuel served as the prototype for future prophets in tension with the kings of Israel and Judah. Samuel warned of the dangers of a monarch (1Sa 8:10-18), recorded the rights and duties of kingship (1Sa 10:25) and anointed Saul and [subsequently] David as Israel's first two kings. Samuel's death brought national mourning (1Sa 25:1; 28:3)" (excerpts from *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1440).

v. 6 **drew/poured out** "That the water rite is somehow penitential may be concluded from its association here with fasting and confession. What we have, then, is almost certainly a ritual of community purification. The details of the ceremony suggest a need for purification. Fasting and confession were intended to purge the community of guilt" (P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *I Samuel*, AB, 144).

v. 9 **burnt offering** The burnt offering served as both an atonement on behalf of Israel and a demonstration of their whole-hearted devotion to Yahweh. "The burnt sacrifice was the only sacrifice that was entirely consumed on the altar. It foreshadows the total sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. It also symbolizes that the worshipper must hold nothing in reserve when coming to God; everything is consumed in the relationship between God and the sincere worshiper. The principle still holds: God's people are to offer their best as a symbol that they are offering all that is theirs. True sacrifice to the Lord is to be done with an attitude of joy - no half-hearted obedience" (**sn**, *Nelson NKJV Study Bible*, 175). The shedding of blood is God's requirement for the atonement of sin (Lev 17:11, Heb 9:22). Ultimately though, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb 10:4). "The suckling lamb foreshadows "the Lamb of God, who [through his sacrificial death on the cross] takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). [Jesus]... offered one sacrifice for sins forever. . . for by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Heb 10:12 NKJV, italics mine).

v. 10 **thundered** "Hannah's Song celebrated Yahweh as the one who thundered and overcame his foes (2:10), [so] what was previously announced as possible is here a reality. Moreover, what Israel's cry could not achieve in 4:6 Yahweh now achieves" (Firth, 107).

v. 12 **Ebenezer** "The plain meaning of the verse is that Samuel erected a stone at the spot to which the rout of the Philistines extended, viz. somewhere between Mizpah and Jeshanah, specified in v 11 as "a point below Beth-car." The statement thus means, "To this point (thus far) Yahweh helped us."

Family Time

In our passage this week the Israelites turned from their idols and repented of their sin. When they turned their hearts back to God, He did amazing things for them and delivered them from their enemy. He does the same kind of things for us today. It's important for our kids to know that God is ready and waiting to fight for them when they turn to him in repentance and walk in obedience. How can we help our kids learn to repent and turn back to God? (1) Keep the lines of communication open. Let your kids know they can talk to you about anything. Create a culture of honest communication in your home. (2) Be intentional about how you react to your kids. Watch your tone, body posture and facial expressions. It is certainly ok to be upset about your child's behavior but manage your response. Love can be firm and compassionate at the same time. (3) Model repentance. Kids are more likely to confess their sin if they see you confess yours. Confessing your shortcomings to them does not make you weaker in their eyes - it make you authentic. (4) Always point your kids to Jesus. Ultimately, good behavior isn't the goal. The goal is for our kids to have a growing personal relationship with their Savior. When they do, repentance will come more easily.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Read 1Sa 7:2-13.

1. What did Samuel say to the Israelites in verse 3?
2. What did the people do?
3. How did God answer in verse 10?

What Do You Think

To be sorry for your sin means you regret that you made a mistake. To repent from your sin means to turn away from it and ask God to help you not make that choice again. Are your sorry about sin or have you repented from it? Are there sins you need to repent of now?

What R U Going To Do

After God delivered the Israelites from the Philistines, they set up a stone to remember it (v. 12). Gather some rocks and each time you repent of a sin this week, set one in a special place. At the end of the week thank God for His forgiveness and love for you!

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Worship - I celebrate God for who He and what He has done for me.

Memory Verse

Colossians 3:17 - *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse ____ . Family completed **Say** ____ **Think** ____ **Do** ____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.