



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V26 N1 January 7, 2024

GOD'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

1 Samuel 9-10

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Personal God

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

*"I lift up my eyes to the
hills – where does my help
come from? My help comes
from the LORD, the Maker
of heaven and earth."*

Psalms 121:1-2



What does
God's mercy
suggest about
our lives?

As we think about God being a Personal God, we acknowledge that God works with us even when we do not deserve his care and concern. Often we spurn God's attention with our own distractions or inventions. As God so often expresses involvement and care in our lives, we often are too busy or too set in our ways to embrace all that God has for us. Thankfully we can take solace in the fact God does not dismiss his children when they are dismissive of him. Even "if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). God may discipline his children (Heb. 12:6), but he does not abandon them. Sometimes in God's mercy, he may take something away from us that is not good for us. At other times in God's mercy, he may even give us what we want, to teach us that our desires are shortsighted.

One of the most moving treatments of God's mercy in print is the love story called *A Severe Mercy* by Sheldon Vanauken (Harper Collins, 1977, reprinted 2011). A description from the book's jacket cover poignantly portrays the writings of Sheldon as he tells the story of his love for his wife Davy. "Winner of the National Book Award and the Gold Medallion Award, this poignant memoir traces the incredible love story of Sheldon and Jean (Davy) Vanauken. While studying at Oxford, the two converted to Christianity after a transformative friendship with C. S. Lewis. This change shook the foundation of their relationship, leading Sheldon to realize that he was no longer Davy's primary love – God was. All they thought they knew was again thrown into question with the illness and untimely death of Davy. Lewis's wife was also terminally ill, and the two men exchanged letters as they struggled to reconcile their faith with the loss of the loves of their lives. *A Severe Mercy* is a beautiful meditation on the power of love, the existence of God, and how to have hope in the midst of tragedy."

The book includes much of the poetry that Sheldon and Davy shared with each other and

over 18 letters to and from C. S. Lewis. The book does include the reality, changes and choices of the Vanaukens, often detailing the messiness of human love (what love story does not include such matters?). Sheldon details that he so valued the love of his "Davy" that he did not want even God to interfere with their intimacy. C. S. Lewis, in a pointed letter, challenged this creation of Sheldon's and told him that God may have to send a "severe mercy" at some point to challenge Sheldon's exaltation of human intimacy to the realm of idolatry. Lewis wrote to Sheldon about the invincibility of all human loves dying, some with a funeral or some with a reprioritization and resurrection from US to US AND GOD. Lewis' words: "Perpetual spring-time is not allowed. You were not cutting the wood of life according to the grain. There are various possible ways in who it could have died though both the parties went on living. You have been treated with a severe mercy. You have been brought to see (how true & how very frequent this is!) that you were jealous of God. So from US you have been led back to US AND GOD; it remains to go on to GOD AND US. She was further on than you, and she can help you more where she now is than she could have done on earth" (Vanauken, 292).

As God deals with us personally, we may not be so unfortunate as to lose a loved one. God may take something else away that we value more than him. Or God may actually grant us what we think would be the solution to all of our problems, to teach us that only he can be our Savior and Solution. As a personal God, He knows exactly what we need. Whatever "severe mercy" you are experiencing currently may be just the thing that adjusts your assumptions and shows you how much God deeply cares for you. Don't run from God's "severe mercies." His mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-23). Whether they be a mercy of subtraction or a mercy of addition, learn the lesson that God God loves you and is concerned about your every situation. Learn from his mercies.

Read 1 Samuel 10:17-27**(also read 1 Sam. 8-10 for more context)**

17 Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the Lord at Mizpah 18 and said to them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you.' 19 But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your disasters and calamities. And you have said, 'No, appoint a king over us.' So now present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and clans."

20 When Samuel had all Israel come forward by tribes, the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. 21 Then he brought forward the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, and Matri's clan was taken. Finally Saul son of Kish was taken. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found. 22 So they inquired further of the Lord, "Has the man come here yet?"

And the Lord said, "Yes, he has hidden himself among the supplies."

23 They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others. 24 Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the man the Lord has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people."

Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

25 Samuel explained to the people the rights and duties of kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the Lord. Then Samuel dismissed the people to go to their own homes.

26 Saul also went to his home in Gibeah, accompanied by valiant men whose hearts God had touched. 27 But some scoundrels said, "How can this fellow save us?" They despised him and brought him no gifts. But Saul kept silent. [NIV]

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline the word "Lord" in the passage.
- Draw a box around the word "but" in 1 Sam. 10:19 showing contrast.
- Double underline the phrase "taken by lot" in 1 Sam. 10:20.
- Circle the description "a head taller" in 1 Sam. 10:23.
- Place brackets around the phrase "there is no one like him" in 1 Sam. 10:24.
- Above the word "kingship" in 1 Sam. 10:25, write 1 Sam 8:10-18.
- Circle the words "valiant men" in 1 Sam. 10:26.
- Circle the word "scoundrels" in 1 Sam. 10:27.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Read 1 Samuel 9:1-27. How did God reveal to Saul that he would become king of Israel?
2. According to Samuel, how had the people of Israel rejected God (see 1 Sam. 10:17-19; also 1 Sam. 8:1-9)?
3. Why was Saul presented to the people of Israel as though he was “taken by lot” (1 Sam. 10:20-21)?
4. Who revealed where Saul was hiding? What does this detail contribute to the story of Saul?
5. How is Saul described in 1 Samuel (1 Sam. 10:23-24; also 1 Sam. 9:2)?
6. What was the people of Israel’s response when Saul was brought out and stood among the people?
7. What was included in Samuel’s explanation of human kingship (see 1 Sam. 8:9-22)?
8. What did Saul experience shortly after his inauguration as king (1 Sam. 10:26-27)?
9. God would later install David as king and bring the promised Messiah through David’s lineage, not through Saul’s. Why would God choose Saul as king first but then replace him with David?
10. What connection do you see between God’s mercy and his answers to prayer?

Commentary On The Text

The history of Israel, God's chosen people, is a telling of the work of a perfect God, patiently dealing with imperfect people. Paul claims that the history of Israel is for our benefit as followers of Jesus Christ. "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Cor. 10:11-12).

In 1 Samuel 8-10, we see the transition of Israel from a people led by God to a people governed by a human king. Samuel lamented the demand of the people for a king to rule them. Samuel identified the rejection of God in such a request (1 Sam. 8:6-8). He also warned of the dangers that would come with a human sovereign (1 Sam. 8:11-18). The people were adamant that they wanted a human king "like the other nations" (1 Sam. 8:19-20). "Israel wants a king who will ensure social justice and national security (1 Sam. 8:4-5, 19). Ancient Near Eastern kings were responsible for providing both of these benefits. Yet there is a downside to kingship. A royal bureaucratic institution inevitably grows and needs to be subsidized by those whom it protects. As it gains more and more power, this royal bureaucracy can easily become oppressive. This is exactly the picture that Samuel paints for the people as he describes what the typical king will be like. Eventually they will view their king as a tyrant, not a protector. Too late they will discover that having a king like other nations is not as desirable as they expect it to be" Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *1 & 2 Samuel*, Teach the Text Commentary, 50-51).

God did not overtly judge Israel for this demand, but mercifully instructed Samuel to appoint a king he would send (1 Sam. 8:22; 10:19). 1 Samuel 9 describes the man chosen to be King, Saul from the tribe of Benjamin. "Saul is an impressive young man. His father's lengthy genealogy implies the family has great wealth. Saul himself strikes an imposing figure, literally standing out in the crowd (9:2; 10:23-24). A future warning against putting too much value on the appearance or height of a particular candidate for the throne (cf. 16:7) may indicate that Saul's appearance is a major factor in his selection as king. From the present passage we know that God appoints Saul and blesses him with all that he needs to serve well. But it is also true that Saul is ultimately the people's choice. Yahweh grants as their first king 'the man who in all Israel came nearest to fulfilling their idea of what a king should be'" (Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel*, The NIV Application Commentary, 162).

The selection of Israel's first king from the tribe of Benjamin presents a prophetic problem. In the blessings of Jacob's sons, a ruler from the line of Judah was predicted (Gen. 49:10). Jesus as Messiah is authenticated upon his connection to the lineage of King David of the tribe of Judah. Why then would God install the first king of Israel from the line of Benjamin? Some have suggested that perhaps a first king installed from the smallest tribe would perhaps limit problems of jealousy and

conflict among the other tribes. The human wisdom in the people's appeal and acceptance of Saul also runs counter to the ways in which God often chose and promoted those who were least likely to lead. Isaac rather than Ishmael, Jacob rather than Esau, the second Adam (Jesus) over the first Adam – these examples all point to the wisdom of God that chooses not according to the outward, but according to the heart. The installation of Saul shows the failures of human choice and sets the stage for a king like David, who would be a man after God's own heart. Saul would be the first of many kingly failures, including David and Solomon. These failures set the stage for the coming of the King of Kings himself, Jesus who is more than just a human king. The failures of the human kings of Israel highlight the need for a divine king to come (Mark 1:1-3).

The installation of Saul as king (1 Sam. 10) does show that God was actively responsible for the appointment of this Benjamite. Saul was anointed by God's prophet (1 Sam 10:1), he was filled with God's Spirit (1 Sam 10:10) and he was divinely led back to his family and their lost donkeys (1 Sam 10:2, 14). These signs (1 Sam 10:9) proved to a reluctant Saul that he was being lifted up by God. These signs also served as points of authentication to Samuel and the people.

The final demonstration of God's choosing of Saul as Israel's first king was the casting of lots among the tribes (1 Sam 10:17-24). It is very likely that all 12 tribes were brought before the prophet before the last and smallest tribe. Benjamin was chosen by lot, a method dependent upon God's determination. This randomized action would prove to the people that this was not just the choice of Samuel but was the very work of God. After the tribe, then the family was selected by lot and then finally Saul himself was identified by this divine determination. When he could not be found, the people inquired of God and were told by God that Saul was hidden among the supplies. Even though the choice of Saul was exuberantly accepted by the people, God very much gave the people what they wanted.

"When God's people foolishly seek false security and reject his authority, he may discipline them by letting them experience the consequences of their behavior. While the Lord protects the people from their lack of foresight, he also decides to discipline them for their lack of commitment. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that he employs their superficial standard in choosing a king, one that focuses on outward appearances rather than inner qualities. The structure of Samuel's speech suggests that the granting of a king is actually a disciplinary punishment for the people's rejection of God's rule (10:17-19). Saul, the 'one asked for,' will prove to be a disappointment, and his reign will jeopardize Israel's security and bring the nation precariously close to disaster. The story illustrates the saying 'Be careful what you ask for, because you just might get it!' Even when God displays his mercy, he sometimes disciplines his people for their ultimate good (cf. Heb. 12:7-11). Forgiveness does not necessarily eliminate the need for discipline" (Chisholm, 66-67).

Word Studies/Notes

10:17 *rejected* “Despite Yahweh’s instruction to give the people a king, Samuel cannot resist reminding the gathered tribes that they have rejected the better path of obedience to Yahweh. Although Yahweh had delivered the people from Egypt and rescued them from the grip of other oppressive kingdoms (v. 18) — thus proving the efficacy of the traditional theocracy — the people had rejected Yahweh’s salvific leadership in favor of an earthly monarch (v. 19a). Samuel’s speech takes the form of a prophetic oracle, and the final part of the oracle — the judgment — consists of instructions for the royal lottery (v. 19b). [Sacred Lots] The implication is that God will judge Israel by giving them what they want; the vagaries of kingship will be punishment enough” (Tony W. Cartledge, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, 142).

10:20 *lot* “The physical object that was ‘taken’ (*nilkad*, ‘captured’) was probably a token of some sort, a symbol of the tribe or clan involved. The pass. form leaves the logical subject unspecified, but it is probably a ‘divine passive,’ indicating that Yahweh (through his oracle) did the selecting. Thus it happened that, although Saul’s token was selected, Saul himself was nowhere to be found. No one knew where he was, because he had deliberately hidden. The freedom and enthusiasm of his response the previous day had vanished, to be replaced by fear and reluctance. It is sometimes suggested that his motive was modesty. But which of us has not at some time accepted a daunting assignment and then, after thinking about it overnight, sought to withdraw? It is simple human nature, transcending centuries and cultures. Saul’s confidence would eventually return, and God would vindicate the choice of this man by a stunning victory” (Harry A. Hoffner Jr., *1 & 2 Samuel*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary, 1 Sa 10:20–21).

10:21 *Saul* “Because of Saul’s apparent absence, the people ask Yahweh about his whereabouts, apparently assuming others are still to arrive, and that Saul must be one of them. The process of asking enables the narrator to play with Saul’s name in much the same way as in ch. 1, since the name ‘Saul’ comes from the verb ‘to ask’. However, where the play on Saul’s name there depended ultimately on his absence, here it depends on his presence. The matter is resolved when Yahweh points out that he is hiding in the kit. Based on this, the people run to find Saul, who is then brought to them, with the first thing everyone noting about him being his great height. There is thus a deliberate echo of 9:2, which in turn points to his apparent suitability to be king, though it makes his attempt at hiding even more bizarre. However, before we hear of any reaction from the people, Samuel affirms that Saul is the one Yahweh

has chosen as king, stressing his uniqueness. Thus there is still a tension for Samuel. Although he recognizes the inappropriateness of a king, he has also worked with Yahweh so that the one chosen to be king is still Yahweh’s king. Through the combination of the lot as the means by which Yahweh’s will is revealed, and the prophetic announcement by Samuel, the people give a great cheer, indicating their recognition of Saul as king” (David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, vol. 8, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, 132–133).

10:23 *taller* “This is the second time that we have been told that Saul was taller by a head than any Israelite. Here, obviously, the context calls for this information, since he literally ‘stood out’ among the people and looked like the obvious choice as their leader. In the earlier mention (1 Sam 9:2) it was merely our first look at the man, and it might be questioned why this information was needed already at that time. In that case it functions to show what an ideal son he was for his father Kish: ‘a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; he was head and shoulders taller than any one of the people.’ What do the two passages have in common? In the first we are given our first glimpse of the obedient son whom his father chose to recover lost donkey mares, and in the second our first glimpse of the man Yahweh chose to rescue his people from surrounding enemies. Ecce homo! ‘Behold, the man!’ Saul was taller than any other Israelite. ‘There is no one like him among all the people!’ Saul is put on display before the assembled representatives as Yahweh’s chosen leader. Nowhere else did Yahweh put a chosen ruler on physical display and ask the people to admire his physical appearance. In fact, later Samuel is warned not to look on the outward appearance of Jesse’s other sons, because God only looks on the heart (1 Sam 16:6–7). Saul was one of a kind (בְּכָל־כְּמוֹהוּ אֵין הָעָם, bekhal-kamohu ein ha’am). In the words of Samuel, he was ‘the one whom Yahweh has chosen’ (יְהוָה בָּחַר־בּוֹ אֲשֶׁר, yhwah bachar-bo asher). The enthusiasm of this moment must not be dimmed by thinking ahead to David. Yes, Saul ultimately failed. Yes, David was eventually said to be the man whom God really wanted (1 Sam 13:14; see Jer 3:15). But at this point we are expected to admire with the people this man whom Yahweh took from following the donkey mares, as he took David from following the sheep, and made a ruler” (Hoffner, 1 Sa 10:23–24).

10:27 *scooundrels* “Not all enthusiastically rallied to the side of Saul. There were some troublemakers (lit., ‘sons of Belial’), i.e., worthless, good-for-nothing persons as in 1:16; 2:12. This came to be the standard designation for those who were accused of undermining the monarchy (cf. 2 Sam 16:7; 20:1; 23:6). These worthless troublemakers rejected God’s choice for their first king” (James E. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, The College Press NIV Commentary, 149–150).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Be careful what you demand from God; sometimes he may give you more of a lesson than an answer to your prayer.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

There are several monumental changes a parent witnesses in their child over time. I remember comparing pictures of my oldest son's first day of kindergarten to his last in absolute amazement. How did my wee little preschooler suddenly morph into a real person? Eighth grade is another giant leap. Somehow, they lose the baby fat (while simultaneously consuming mountains of food), begin to understand and process higher levels of thinking and possess the uncanny ability to grow an entire foot overnight. The biggest change a parent might witness, however, isn't quite so sudden. Over time, the slow drip of sanctification combined with the growth of spiritual gifts mingled with God's call on your child's life produces the person God intends. Suddenly you're staring at His handiwork in the flesh doing the work He prepared in advance specifically for that same little tot you thought would never grasp potty training. Parenting is a marathon, not a sprint, and though we might see sudden bursts of physical, emotional or spiritual growth, it's the long game where we see the most rewarding growth. One day you walk into their room and you'll find them praying or reading their Bible without being prompted to do so. Like a plant that lies dormant for years, that planted seed will one day shoot up out of the ground and blossom into the unique flower it was intended to be. We have the unbelievable privilege of nurturing, growing and discipling our child so they fully understand God's call on their life. How will you commit to discipling your child this year? How will you show them all that God intends them to be?

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 1 Samuel 9-10

1. What were Saul and the servant looking for?
2. Who was the "seer" and what did he tell Samuel?
3. Where did this message come from?

What Do You Think?

Explain prophecy. Who prophesied in this passage?

What Do You Do?

We can bring God's Word to people today. Encourage a friend using this month's memory verse (or another memory verse).

CORE COMPETENCY: Personal God

I believe God cares about everything in my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Ephesians 2:10

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME _____

GRADE _____

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

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.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

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.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

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.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

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.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with 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.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

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.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him 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.

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

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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