

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

January 7, 2024

FALLEN KINGS

Fear

1 Samuel 15, Matthew 4:2-4

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NOTES

Looking back at your notes from this week's message, was there anything you heard for the first time, stuck with you, challenged or confused you?

What is the one important thing you will take away from this weekend's message or our community group discussion? Is there any challenge, difficulty or praise that you would like to share with the group for prayer?

Pastor Matt talked about the dangers of allowing fears to motivate us; they tend to push us toward unwise decisions that end up hurting ourselves and others.

MY STORY

Talk about a situation when you took things into your own hands out of fear or a need to control the outcome, rather than waiting on God and trusting in His timing. What happened? What might have turned out differently?

WHAT DOES GOD WANT US TO HEAR?

Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may bow before the Lord." And Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel." As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. And Samuel said to him, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you." (1 Samuel 15:24-28)

Referencing the whole story in 1 Samuel 15, what specifically had Saul done to sin against God? (See specifically 1 Samuel 15:3 and verse 9)

What did Saul say was his reason for not listening to God? (See 1 Samuel 15:20-21)

Why doesn't God accept the king's partial obedience?

Some would say that Saul's fear was justified, and that monarchs should listen to what their people want. What did God want from Saul instead of "fearing the people and obeying their voice"?

And Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel." (1 Samuel 15:26)

This passage shows that God doesn't always waive the consequences of our bad choices, even if He's willing to forgive our sins. Even though Saul begs for forgiveness and tries to correct his actions later on in the passage, God still rejects him from being king over Israel.

Who will take Saul's place as the next king over Israel? (Hint: it's a "man after God's own heart")



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Who is Saul most concerned about impressing in the passage, even when Samuel tells him that he's sinned against God and that God has rejected him from being King? (See 1 Samuel 15:30)

Who does Saul blame for his actions? (See 1 Samuel 15:21 and verse 24) Does he demonstrate true repentance or is he just trying to get out of the consequences of his actions?

What would true repentance have looked like in Saul's situation?

And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:2-4)

This passage shows a contrast with 1 Samuel 15, where Jesus is in what most would consider a fearful situation. The ESV Study Bible explains that forty days is about the longest a human can fast without permanent bodily harm.

How did Jesus respond when faced with the fearful situation of maybe having a medical episode from lack of food (assuming he fully understood that this wasn't his time to die)?

One of the biggest temptations Jesus faced in this scenario was having the power to take things into his own hands instead of trusting God. Instead, Jesus demonstrates a godly "fear" and turns to God for help.

What does it mean to "fear God" in biblical and healthy sense?

What does God want us to hear? Based on the passage and above questions, what "takeaways" do you think God has revealed to you?

WHAT DOES GOD WANT US TO DO?

How should we first respond when faced with a fearful situation?

What should you do if you've prayed about something and God has not responded?

Does waiting on God mean never acting on anything unless He gives clear and explicit instructions to do so? What does waiting on God mean to you?

What could "fearing" God look like in your own life?

What does God want us to do? Flowing out of reading and interpretation, what action does this passage or the Spirit's leading, call you to?

WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO DO?

Take time this week to reread some of your favorite Bible stories of courage and bravery and reflect on how the heroes chose to trust in God rather than take the situation into their own hands. How did God come through for them?

Journal or look through your previous journals and reflect how God has responded to your requests for help and direction in the past. How has He come through for you in your times of need?

Fasting in the Bible was (and is) used as a means of "focusing intently on prayer" (ESV footnote). Pick something to fast from this week (it doesn't have to be food) and focus instead on praying to God for help in being filled with the biblical fear of God rather than earthly fear this year.

What does true repentance look like to you? Take time this week to reflect and truly acknowledge and own-up-to of any ways you may be trying to take things into your own hands, rather than waiting on God's timing.

What does God want ME to do? What is the personal application and action step God is calling you, personally, toward?