**Week Seven – October 4/5 – I Samuel 9-10**

**Introduction -** Let’s talk about first impressions. It is hard for us to truly monitor the first impression vibe other people get of us, but **what would be a descriptor or two of the kind of first impression you believe that you give off - quiet, life of the party, confident, awkward, other? Over time how accurate are your first impressions of other people?**

The first descriptors of Saul seem to bode well for Israel getting the impressive king that they want - his dad was a man of good standing, he was handsome, and he was a head taller than anyone else. But in the chapters to come, a more accurate picture of Saul emerges.

Heart and character are not immediately seen on the outside. We can often fall into the same trap as Israel, drawn in by what looks good to us at first glance. But the only way to discern what we are really seeing is to trust the One who is unseen.

Saul reflected the spiritual state of the whole nation of Israel. They may have presented a spiritual image, but their heart was far from where God wanted it to be.

**Read I Samuel 9**

**Did your parents ever let you “learn the hard way” by letting you do something or have something you wanted that wasn’t the best for you?** Even if you never experienced this, you can likely see the point and the connection. In almost every point in the story of Saul, there are hints that God is temporarily allowing the Israelites to have what they want to teach them that God knows what they need. He is a patient Father trying to break through their stubbornness.

**In verses 1-2, how is Saul being described?** (*description is all physical not spiritual)***Later in the book as we see David emerging as a future king, we have this incredible reminder - (Read 1 Samuel 16:7), “For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” In what ways do you find yourself falling into being more concerned about what man sees and values rather than what God sees and values? If God is concerned with the heart, how can you and I pay better attention to the state of the heart?**

**What are the first big hints here (in verses 5-8) that Saul is not the leader that the people that the people hope that their king will be?** (*Saul is giving up, the servant turns to God. His servant is providing the leadership here in ideas, problem solving, and provision.)*

Notice the great providence of God in the seemingly ordinary day to day tasks set before us. So far as Saul was concerned, he was sent out by his dad to find the lost donkeys. Little did he know he would stumble upon kingship. Even the most casual tasks are ordained by God. “A man’s steps are from the LORD; how then can man understand his way? (Proverbs 20:24)” Even though we may not be able to trace God’s hand, His providence is in all things. **What simple task(s) has the Lord put in front of you to be faithful with?** (*Homework, basics of relationships).* **What is revealed about your heart when you feel as though God has no purpose in the tasks you’ve been given? In the past, how have you seen God’s providence at work even in the ordinary things of life?**

We will see more and more problematic aspects of Saul being king, let's pause and highlight a characteristic we can learn from in verse 21. **Read I Samuel 9:21**. Although we have already seen signs of Saul not living up to be the king the people want him to be, we do see him respond in humility to the news of him being king. Saul see himself belonging to the least of the tribes of Israel, unfit for the work God has called him to. There is a sense of humbleness at this point, but as we will see in later chapters that humility grows into a damning pride. This is a clear reminder that humility in the beginning does not guarantee humility in the end. **How do you retain a posture of humility and integrity before God each day?**

**Read I Samuel 10**

Verses 1-8 show the amazing detail that comes with God’s provision and confirmation here. The detail of the prophecy had to be an ongoing encouragement to Saul to help him know that God’s hand was on him and ready to uphold him. **Have you ever had an experience with God where you thought, “Wow - He is so real and present - how could I ever doubt Him! I will never doubt again!”?** **If you have had an experience like that, please share.** We can sometimes develop “spiritual amnesia” to the definitive works of His hand in our lives. This is why disciplines like journaling and speaking out to others about the goodness of God are so important and formative. As we take time to slow down, reflect on, and declare His goodness, it battles that “spiritual amnesia” and makes us even more receptive and observant to seeing His work. **What are some ways in your life where you have seen God remind you of His goodness when you have lost focus on that truth?**

Dale Ralph Davis makes the following observation about verses 6-8. “Saul is to receive both the power of the Spirit (vv 6-7) *and* the direction of the word through Samuel (v 8)... Yahweh’s Spirit gives power; but that power is to be exercised in obedience to Yahweh’s word. The Spirit and the Word must never be separated. What right have we to think we can enjoy the Lord’s power and presence when we deny his lordship by trampling on his word (Luke 6:46)?” And another quote by Davis, “Many crave dramatic signs of the Spirit’s power but have little enthusiasm for common obedience to the Lord’s word.” **Why is it dangerous for the church (or individual believers) today to love the sensational but not be committed to live and teach simple obedience to God? Are there examples or instances where you have seen this happen in and around your life?**

**Read I Samuel 10:9-27.** These verses lead us into the coronation of King Saul. **How does Samuel’s statement in verse 19 make this different from any other coronation/installation of a king that you’ve ever heard of?**

**What is the next big hint here that Saul is not the leader that the people will think that he is?** (*He is hiding among the supplies when it is time for him to step forward - verse 22.*) **What are ways that we can hide when God is calling us to step forward in some step of obedience?**

**Conclusion -** Both chapters highlight Saul’s impressive outward appearance. Both highlight places where Saul’s courage, leadership, character and heart were not ready for the moment. Samuel is brutally honest at the coronation that the people’s embracing of Saul is an extension of their rejection of God.

Pray for each other for the opportunities and choices you will have this week. **If you were to ask for prayer for one of these areas which would it be?**:

* Pray that you would not judge others by outward appearance or general impression - that you would see each one as people whom God created and people you can have a joy in getting to know.
* Pray that you would not be concerned about your own impression management - that you would focus more on letting God develop character in you instead of worrying about what people think of you.
* Pray that you would long more for what God most wants for you (even if you don’t know what that is) instead of what you think you want.