**Week Nine – October 18/19 – I Samuel 14**

**Introduction -** We are not wading in slowly tonight - let’s start with some questions that may require a little more thought and reflection. **Can you think of ways that your definitions of who God is, his nature and character, changed between childhood and high school? Can you think of ways that your definitions of who God is, his nature and character, changed between high school and now?**

Our chapter tonight may feel like a momentary detour as we focus on the story and personal character of Jonathan. We have seen glimpses of who Saul thinks God is, but a helpful question to keep asking as you read the passage is, “Based on the evidence of his words and his actions, who does Jonathan think God is?”

**Read I Samuel 14:1-5**

The author sets the scene for us and we should notice distinct comparisons between Jonathan and Saul. **What differences do you notice between Jonathan and Saul? What is the author trying to emphasize by drawing attention to priest Ahijah’s family line?** - *(As Saul and the leaders are hiding away we’re reminded that God has rejected not only Saul’s reign, 13:13-14, but also the line of priests that Saul is still holding on to).* **Compare the environments of Saul and Jonathan, how do they speak to their faith?** *- (Saul takes shelter in the cool of a cave while Jonathan and his armor bearer trek through a peculiarly difficult terrain to reach the enemy’s camp).*Earlier you were given a helpful question to keep asking tonight - “Based on the evidence of his words and his actions, who does Jonathan think God is?”**With that in mind, how would people describe your faith based on the actions they see? Would it be scary for your friends to evaluate your faith based on your actions and why?**

**Read I Samuel 14:6-15**

**In these verses, where do you see Jonathan and his armor bearer make statements of encouragement and faith?** (*For example, some would say “uncircumsized” is an insult, but instead consider it as an encouragement to the Israelites, that God pursued them and made a covenant with them*.) **What does verse 6 further reveal about Jonathan’s understanding of who God is? [***Jonathan did not presuppose God would deliver him, but understood God’s power and that nothing is too hard for the Lord (Jer 32:17).*] **Without a sense of arrogance, Jonathan displays daring faith rooted in truth about God. Would you describe yourself as having a daring faith? Why or why not? How do you respond when you see a brother or sister act on daring faith?** *(admiration, jealousy, conviction, other?)*

**Read I Samuel 14:16-23**

**How does Saul continue to show his lack of faith even as he sees what is happening to the Philistines?** (*Instead of directing the men forward, he takes roll-call. He also inquires with Ahijah about the ark, again treating it like a good luck charm instead of a reminder of God’s continual presence and care.*)

Verse 23 sums up the Lord’s own doing by saving Israel. Jonathan was right that ‘nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few’ (v6b). This quote sums up the difference here between Jonathan and Saul, “This salvation, however, did not begin in royal mathematics (13:15b; 14:2,17) but with imaginative faith, faith that was willing to say, ‘Perhaps the LORD will act for us’ (Davis).” There is a stark contrast between Saul’s approach and Jonathan’s approach. **How do you discern the difference between “pausing to make sure you are ready” and “stepping forward in faith”?**

**Read I Samuel 14:24-46**

Saul once again seeks to appear spiritual by implementing a fast, however **what indication is there that Saul’s heart is not in the right place?** - (Saul put Israel under an oath so *he* could take vengeance on *his* enemies). Even if doing something ‘spiritual’ Saul puts the focus on himself rather than the Lord. **When are you tempted to shift the focus to being on yourself rather than on God?**

In verses 25-30, the Israelite army is tired and hungry after an intense battle with the Philistines and God provided them with honey. Canaan flowed with honey - here it was, on the ground right before their eyes, yet Saul’s foolish oath prevented them from receiving what God put right in front of them. **Are there similar situations today where we miss the ways God provides for us because of our own foolishness or pride?**

The foolishness and stubbornness of Saul is further highlighted in verses 41-46. A command that should not have been made and was not delivered to all the people moves things to the brink of Saul losing his son. Consider this moment this against other parallels:

* Abraham is willing to obey God even to the point of sacrificing his son, but God provides a ram in the thicket - a picture of the greatest provided sacrifice, Jesus. (Genesis 22)
* Hannah is willing to give up her son to the service and glory of God. (I Samuel 1)
* Our Father was willing for his Son to die, taking on the weight of all of sin for all of history, to restore us to him.

There is no glory to God in Saul’s decree. It is only about him. And instead of relenting at any point, he doubles down on his stubbornness. He is willing to lose the most “glory to God” oriented soldier he has (who happens to be his son!) because he cannot admit that he is wrong.

**Is stubbornness or hesitancy to admit being wrong something you have struggled with? Does anyone have a story about God getting your attention about an area like this - a time when you backed down from a stubborn position because God softened your heart?**

**Read I Samuel 14:47-52**

The chapter ends with summary statements about his legacy in battle, his family, and his rule. It seems odd to have this summary at the start of his reign; it is almost as if his reign is done. And in chapter 15, even though he has decades to go in his reign, we will learn about how his kingship has been rejected by God.

His summary starts strong, addressing how valiant Saul was in battle, but verse 52 brings out two of the great problems of his kingship:

1. Continual war appears to be the only destination in Saul’s kingdom.
2. Saul’s ego and personal glory as a warrior is his only goal.

Consider this commentary on these final verses in chapter 14: “The text reveals that Saul enlists people into *his* army rather than *God’s* army… We have seen that Saul uses the things of God when it is expedient - he has no real desire for his men to follow the Lord.” (Christ-Centered Exposition - Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel, Thomas and Greear, page 100). **What might be some of the indicators that someone “uses the things of God when it is expedient” instead of walking in faith and trusting God’s leadership?**

**Conclusion:** Having faith in God is not some whimsical random expression of belief as if you were blindfolded and are told simply just to have faith. Putting our faith in God is trusting and fully believing that God is who He says He is and then acting accordingly to that truth just as Jonathan did. But in order to act in faith, you must be acquainted with who God is and what promises He has given to us in Christ Jesus. Here are a few of those promises given. Spend some time this next week going through these promises and what it might mean for you to live by faith in accordance with that promise. Try to identify very specific things in your life that these promises affect and how you would walk by faith.

* Philippians 4:19
* 2 Corinthians 9:8
* Hebrews 13:5-6
* Romans 8:32
* James 4:7
* 2 Corinthians 12:9

**Additional Notes:**

* We don’t know in verse 1 why Jonathan “did not tell his father” about advancing into the Philistine camp. Was it because he didn’t want to get in trouble? Was it because he no longer respected his father’s opinion or leadership? There are no strong contextual cues to point to one reason over another.
* What is the big deal in verse 33 that they ate meat with blood still in it? In Deut 12:23-25, God specifically commands to drain the blood before eating the animal. Their obedience to Saul’s foolish command led them to disobey God’s clearly declared command.