

1 Samuel – Week 11 – A King Proven – Bible Study Helps

Title: A King Proven

Saul's first leadership test – Crisis, Courage, and Character in Leadership

Sermon Summary: Drawing from 1 Samuel 11, this sermon examines Saul's first test as the newly anointed king of Israel. When the Ammonite leader Nahash threatened to gouge out the right eyes of the men of Jabesh Gilead, Saul was confronted with an immediate leadership crisis. Empowered by the Spirit of God, he rallied the nation of Israel to military victory and then, in the aftermath, refused to allow the moment of triumph to become an occasion for revenge against those who had previously doubted him. The sermon draws three core lessons from this narrative: that crisis reveals whether leaders will step toward responsibility or retreat from it; that true courage is not the absence of fear but obedience to God under pressure; and that godly character is most clearly seen not in the moment of crisis but in the moment of victory, when pride and vindictiveness are most tempting. The sermon connects these lessons to the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit available to every believer and calls the congregation to respond faithfully to the needs and crises God places before them.

Key Points:

- Adversity and crisis are not merely hardships but tests that reveal the true character, source of strength, and purpose of a leader
- The enemy's goal is not merely defeat but humiliation and reproach, mirroring the strategy of Satan against believers
- God's people are prone to running to the world for help in times of crisis rather than seeking God first
- The Spirit of God enables believers to respond to injustice with righteous anger rather than passive indifference or carnal rage
- Courage is not fearlessness but doing what is right even when there is personal cost or risk involved
- The most dangerous place in the Christian life is the place of blessing and victory, where pride and revenge are most tempting
- Godly character is demonstrated when a leader refuses to use power, influence, or victory as an opportunity for personal vindication
- Saul's response in giving glory to God rather than taking personal credit or punishing his critics reflects the humility God requires of those He uses
- Christians are called to recognize the needs around them, refuse to treat responsibility as someone else's problem, and step into the role God has assigned them

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Samuel 11:1-15 (primary passage)
- Exodus 23:32, on God's command against making covenants with the enemy

1 Samuel – Week 11 – A King Proven – Bible Study Helps

- Judges 1:4-7, on Adonai Bezak and the pattern of the enemy humiliating opponents
- Nehemiah 1:1-11, on responding to crisis with prayer and willingness to act
- Exodus 4:14, on the righteous anger of God toward Moses
- John 2:12-17, on Jesus cleansing the temple
- Ephesians 4:23-28, on being angry without sinning
- Luke 10:30-35, the parable of the Good Samaritan
- Romans 12:19, on leaving vengeance to God
- Proverbs 16:18, on pride preceding destruction
- 1 Peter 5:5, on God resisting the proud and giving grace to the humble

Stories:

- The account of Nahash the Ammonite threatening to gouge out the right eyes of the men of Jabesh Gilead as an act of terror and national humiliation
- The biblical account of Adonai Bezak in Judges 1, who cut off the thumbs and great toes of seventy kings and was later repaid in kind, illustrating the enemy's desire to humiliate
- The calling of Moses and God's righteous anger when Moses made excuses about his inability to speak
- Jesus driving the money changers from the temple as an example of righteous anger without sin
- The parable of the Good Samaritan, used to contrast passive avoidance of need with active, costly compassion
- Nehemiah weeping, fasting, and praying upon hearing of Jerusalem's distress, then stepping forward to lead restoration
- David and Goliath, referenced as an example of courage under impossible circumstances when the focus is on God rather than the size of the problem
- Esther approaching the king at personal risk, referenced as an example of stepping into crisis for the sake of God's people
- The apostles continuing to preach after beatings and imprisonment, and Paul declaring in Acts 20 that none of these things moved him
- Joseph refusing to take revenge on his brothers in Genesis 50
- David refusing to kill Saul when given the opportunity
- The elder brother of the prodigal son, used as a negative example of resentment and jealousy in the moment of another's blessing

1 Samuel – Week 11 – A King Proven – Bible Study Helps

Discipleship Questions

The men of Jabesh-Gilead immediately sought a covenant with their enemy rather than crying out to God -- in what areas of your own life do you find yourself running to worldly solutions before turning to the Lord in prayer?

Nahash sought not just victory but humiliation and reproach against Israel, which the sermon connects to the devil's strategy against believers -- how have you seen the enemy attempt to bring shame or disgrace into your life, and how did you respond?

Nehemiah heard of Jerusalem's crisis and responded with weeping, fasting, and prayer before taking action, while the priest and Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan walked past a man in desperate need -- what does your typical first response to others' suffering reveal about the condition of your heart?

The sermon describes adversity as being like squeezing a tube of toothpaste, revealing what is truly inside a person -- what has a recent crisis or season of pressure exposed about what is genuinely in your heart?

The Spirit of God came upon Saul and kindled righteous anger within him toward the injustice being done to God's people -- how do you distinguish between righteous anger that moves you toward godly action and fleshly anger that leads to sin?

Saul was out working in the field when the crisis arrived, and the sermon notes that those God has called to lead are sometimes simply found going about ordinary life -- how do you remain spiritually prepared and attentive to God's call even during the routine seasons of life?

After the victory over the Ammonites, the people wanted to execute those who had doubted Saul, but Saul refused and gave the glory to God -- in what ways are you tempted to use moments of personal success or vindication as occasions for pride or revenge rather than worship?

The sermon warns that the most dangerous place in the Christian life is the place of blessing and victory, where carelessness and fleshly living can creep in -- can you identify a time when a blessing or success led you into spiritual complacency, and what did you learn from it?

Saul unified the nation by acting in the Spirit's power, connecting his leadership to both himself and Samuel, the man of God -- what does it look like in your own life to pursue Spirit-led action rather than accomplishing the work of God through your own strength and strategy?

The sermon closes by asking whether you use authority to serve people or to control them, and whether you can rejoice in God's work even when you receive no recognition -- which of these questions most directly challenges you, and what would genuine growth in that area look like?

Small Group Guide: A King Proven

Based on 1 Samuel 11

Overview

This session examines Saul's first test as king of Israel, exploring how adversity reveals character, how the Spirit of God enables courage in crisis, and how true godly character is displayed not only in how we respond to difficulty but in how we handle victory. These themes apply directly to every believer's daily walk with Christ.

Key Takeaways

- Adversity and crisis reveal what is truly in a person's heart, much like pressure reveals what is inside a tube.
 - A faithful response to crisis begins with recognizing the seriousness of the need and refusing to treat responsibility as someone else's problem.
 - The Holy Spirit enables believers to respond with righteous concern and courageous action when God's people are hurting or in danger.
 - The most dangerous place in the Christian life is often the place of blessing, where pride and the desire for revenge can take root if we are not careful.
 - True godly character gives God the glory in victory and chooses humility and forgiveness over retaliation.
-

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Think of a time when a crisis or unexpected difficulty revealed something about your character that you did not expect. What did you learn about yourself in that moment?
 2. The sermon opened with the observation that Saul was out in the field doing ordinary work when the crisis arrived. How does life tend to present its greatest challenges, and why do you think God often allows them to arrive unexpectedly?
-

Part One: The Crisis

1 Samuel – Week 11 – A King Proven – Bible Study Helps

3. When the men of Jabesh-Gilead were threatened, their first instinct was to make a covenant with the enemy rather than seek God's help. In what ways do believers today tend to run to the world for solutions before running to God?
 4. The sermon described Nahash's goal as humiliation, not just conquest. How does the enemy work similarly in the lives of believers today, seeking not just to hinder us but to bring shame and disgrace?
 5. Nehemiah's response to the crisis in Jerusalem was to weep, fast, and pray before taking any action. How does that kind of response differ from how most people, including Christians, typically handle bad news? What would it look like to practice that in your own life?
 6. The priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan both saw the wounded man and passed by. The sermon asked honestly whether we sometimes do the same with the needs around us. What makes it difficult to get involved when we see others hurting, and what helps us overcome that resistance?
-

Part Two: The Courage

7. The sermon made the point that the Spirit of God came upon Saul and kindled righteous anger within him toward injustice. How would you describe the difference between righteous anger and ordinary fleshly anger? Can you think of a situation where you have experienced or witnessed righteous anger that led to something good?
 8. Saul's message to all of Israel was sent in the name of both Saul and Samuel, meaning he connected his leadership to the man of God and the word of God. Why is it important for courageous action to be grounded in Scripture and accountability rather than personal initiative alone?
 9. The sermon said that courage is not the absence of fear but doing what is right even when there is something to fear. Where in your life right now is God calling you to take a courageous step that you have been hesitating to take?
 10. The sermon listed several practical ways to develop courage, including remembering who God is, grounding yourself in biblical conviction, taking the next obedient step, accepting that responsibility has a cost, and depending on the Spirit rather than personal strength. Which of these do you find most difficult, and why?
-

Part Three: The Character

11. After the victory, the people wanted to hunt down and punish those who had doubted Saul. Saul refused and gave the glory to God. Why is the moment of victory often just as spiritually dangerous as the moment of crisis?
12. The sermon described vindictiveness as a desire to punish someone out of personal resentment or a desire for revenge. Have you ever had an opportunity to retaliate against someone who wronged you and chosen not to? What was that experience like, and what did it require of you?

1 Samuel – Week 11 – A King Proven – Bible Study Helps

13. Romans 12:19 teaches that vengeance belongs to God, not to us. How does genuinely believing that truth change the way we respond when we have been wronged and then find ourselves in a position of power or advantage?
 14. The sermon closed with this statement: "The most dangerous place in the Christian life is the place of blessing." Do you agree? Why do you think seasons of blessing and success can be spiritually risky?
-

Practical Applications

Work through these individually or as a group and commit to at least one action this week.

Responding to Crisis

- Identify one need or crisis in your life or in the life of someone close to you that you have been treating as someone else's problem. Commit to praying specifically about it this week and taking one concrete step to help.
- Before seeking advice from others or looking for a worldly solution to a current challenge, spend intentional time bringing it to God first in prayer.

Developing Courage

- Write down one area of your life where God is calling you to step up and act but fear has been holding you back. Share it with a trusted believer who can pray for you and hold you accountable.
- Memorize or meditate on a passage this week that strengthens your courage in the Lord, such as Joshua 1:9, Philippians 4:13, or Acts 20:24.

Guarding Character in Victory

- Reflect honestly on whether there is anyone in your life toward whom you have been harboring resentment, waiting for an opportunity to prove them wrong or see them fail. Bring that before God and ask Him to replace it with genuine forgiveness.
 - The next time God brings you through a difficulty or grants you a success, make it a deliberate practice to give Him the glory publicly, whether in conversation, in prayer with others, or in some other tangible way.
-

Closing Reflection

The story of 1 Samuel 11 is not primarily about Saul. It is about a God who raises up leaders, enables His people through His Spirit, and deserves all the glory when the victory comes. As you leave this discussion, consider where God has placed you for such a time as this, what crisis He

1 Samuel – Week 11 – A King Proven – Bible Study Helps

may be calling you to step into rather than avoid, and whether your character in times of both difficulty and blessing is pointing others back to Him.

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by praying specifically for one another. Ask God to reveal areas where each person needs more courage or more humility, and pray that your group would be a community that steps toward need rather than away from it, always giving God the glory for every victory He provides.

5-Day Bible Reading and Devotional Guide

Based on the Sermon "A King Proven" from 1 Samuel 11

Day 1: Stepping Out of the Stuff

Reading: 1 Samuel 10:20-27; 1 Samuel 11:1-5

Devotional: God had already chosen Saul, confirmed His calling with signs, and announced him publicly before all Israel. Yet when the moment came, Saul was hiding in the stuff. How often do we do the same? God places a calling, an opportunity, or a responsibility before us, and instead of stepping forward in faith, we bury ourselves in the ordinary routines of life. The herd still needs tending. The field still calls. But so does God. The crisis in Jabesh-Gilead did not wait for Saul to feel ready. Neither will the needs around you wait for perfect conditions. God does not call the equipped. He equips the called. Step out of the stuff today and answer what He has already confirmed in your life.

Personal Reflection: What calling or responsibility has God placed before you that you have been avoiding by staying busy with ordinary life?

Practical Application: Identify one specific step of obedience you have been delaying. Write it down and commit it to God in prayer today.

Day 2: Crisis as an Opportunity to Run to God

Reading: Nehemiah 1:1-11; Psalm 46:1-11

Devotional: When Nehemiah heard that Jerusalem's walls were broken down and God's people were living in reproach and affliction, his first response was not a strategy meeting or a political maneuver. He sat down, wept, fasted, and prayed. Crisis has a way of revealing where we actually go for help. The men of Jabesh-Gilead ran immediately to the enemy and offered to serve him before they ever considered running to God or to the king God had appointed. Psalm 46 describes God as a very present help in trouble, not an occasional help, not a last resort, but a present and immediate refuge. The question every crisis forces upon us is simple: Where do we run first?

Personal Reflection: In your most recent season of difficulty, what was your first instinct? Did you run to God, to people, or to your own understanding?

Practical Application: The next time a problem arises today, no matter how small, pause before reacting and bring it to God in prayer before doing anything else.

Day 3: Righteous Anger and the Spirit's Enabling

Reading: Ephesians 4:23-32; John 2:13-17; Romans 12:9-21

Devotional: When the Spirit of God came upon Saul and his anger was kindled greatly, this was not a man losing his temper. It was a man moved by God to respond to injustice with decisive action. The Bible does not call us to emotional detachment from the suffering and sin around us. It calls us to be angry and sin not. There is a difference between fleshly anger, which serves the self, and righteous anger, which serves others and honors God. Jesus Christ overturned the tables in the temple not because He was offended personally, but because His Father's house was being defiled and God's people were being exploited. What moves you to action? If nothing stirs you, it may be worth asking whether the love of many has grown cold.

Personal Reflection: Is there an injustice, a false teaching, or a person in pain around you that you have been ignoring because it feels inconvenient to get involved?

Practical Application: Ask God today to stir your heart with His righteous compassion toward one specific need or person in your life, and then take one concrete step to respond.

Day 4: Courage Is Not the Absence of Fear

Reading: Joshua 1:1-9; Acts 20:17-24; Psalm 27:1-14

Devotional: When the apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders that none of these things move me, he was not claiming to be fearless. He was declaring that his fear of failing God was greater than his fear of what men could do to him. Courage is not the absence of fear. It is choosing to do what is right even when fear is present. David ran toward Goliath while every trained soldier in Israel stood paralyzed. Esther walked toward the king knowing it could cost her life. Saul mobilized an army in response to a crisis he had not anticipated and led them to a victory no one expected. God does not ask us to feel brave. He asks us to take the next obedient step and trust that He will meet us there.

Personal Reflection: What fear is currently preventing you from taking a step of obedience that God has been calling you toward?

Practical Application: Memorize Joshua 1:9, which assures us that God commands us to be strong and courageous because He is with us wherever we go. Speak it aloud each morning this week before you begin your day.

Day 5: Humility in the Place of Blessing

Reading: Proverbs 16:18-19; Romans 12:14-21; Luke 15:25-32

Devotional: The most dangerous moment in the Christian life is not the crisis. It is the victory. When Saul led Israel to a decisive military triumph over the Ammonites, the people immediately wanted to use that moment to settle old scores. Bring the men who doubted Saul, they said. Let us put them to death. But Saul refused. He declared that the Lord had brought the salvation and that no man would be put to death on that day. In his finest moment, Saul pointed away from himself and toward God. Pride takes credit for what God has done. Humility returns it. The elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son could not celebrate his brother's restoration because resentment had taken root in the place where gratitude should have lived. Guard your heart carefully in seasons of blessing. They are where the flesh is most dangerous and where character is most clearly revealed.

Personal Reflection: When God blesses you or brings you through a difficult season, is your first impulse to give Him the glory or to remind others of what you endured or accomplished?

Practical Application: Think of someone who has doubted, criticized, or wronged you. Rather than waiting for an opportunity to prove them wrong, choose today to pray for them genuinely and, if possible, to extend a word of encouragement or grace toward them this week.