

1 Samuel 4:1 – 7:2 Who submits to whom?

For Growth Groups week comm 31 July 2023

For Leaders. Below are the reading guide questions your group members may have considered:

Old Testament background: The ark of the covenant is the place where God promises to be present to his people: revealing his ways, providing his mercy. See Exodus 25:10-22 esp v22.

Compare and contrast tool: What error of judgement do both the Israelites and the Philistines make in relation to the ark of the LORD? Consider 4:3 and 5:2 (and then also 6:20!).

Themes tool: Hands are at work throughout these chapters. In what way(s)? To what effect? Whose hands are needed to fight the enemies of the LORD and his people?

Question to ponder: What is/are the lesson/s God's people need to learn about their God?

Main point of this study: God doesn't submit to us, we get to submit to Him.

Warmup: have you ever had a boss (or teacher) that was hard to submit to? What made it hard?

Today's passage talks about **the ark of God**.

What: From Exodus, this is the gold covered box with connected poles to carry it. On top are the gold covered figures of cherubim. Inside are the stone carved tablets with the 10 commandments.

Why: God promised to reveal his word and his ways, to make his mercy available, and to dwell among them. The ark of the LORD is the sign and assurance of these promises of God to his people.

Question: Can the ark of God be used for one's own purposes?

We have a long passage this week! Pray asking for God to speak; and then read.

Either: 1 Samuel 4:1-7:2 (will likely take ~15 mins) **OR 4:1-18, 5:1-12, 6:10-16, 6:19-7:2** (will likely take ~10 mins)

There is horror, comedy and confusion here! What are your first reactions?

Break into groups to try and make sense, of the details and then of the whole.

Each group given a chapter (Ch 4 or Ch 5 or Ch 6) and the same three questions:

1. What do they want with the ark?
2. What happens?
3. Why? (is there an explanation given?)

Report back working through the three questions for each chapter (each group ~3 mins)

What do the ch 4 Israelites, ch 5 Philistines, and ch 6 people of Beth Shemesh have in common?

(They all think they can in some way control God, have him do what they want).

What is the main thing here about God?

(He is the LORD: there is no one holy like the LORD, there is none besides him. He won't be dictated to. We submit to him.)

How does God encourage us into willing submission, rather than forced submission?

(In the person of his Son the Lord Jesus submits himself into the hands of men. He does so out of submission to his father and to save us. Rather than terrify us into submission (which he could) God invites to gladly submit to Him who is good).

In what areas of life is it difficult for us to submit and trust God?

Pray these things for our church and ourselves.