

## **1 Samuel 7:2-17 for Growth Group: When life with God goes well**

For week commencing 7/8/23

*Note for leaders (1) : This week something a bit different – a series of tasks for teams of 2 or 3. Where the idea is that each little group focus their attention for ~10 mins, and then report back, and God-willing as all the groups finish, \*hopefully\* this makes the whole clear!*

*To make this possible, I suggest printing out and cutting up and distributing the particular questions below to the particular teams. You may need multiple copies. I've listed the team tasks in order of difficulty (easiest to hardest).*

*Warm up qn: Do you find monuments helpful? Why don't Christians set up more monument stones to help with remembering? What does the New Testament give us for this same purpose?*

### **Read 1 Samuel 7:2-17**

This week as something different: we're breaking into little teams with a different focus for each to help us cover the whole passage from different angles. When we report back hopefully it helps the main ideas and connections to jump out to us. 10 mins for the tasks then 3 min report back.

#### **Objects (and places) tool**

1. What are all the objects of the chapter (eg Ashtoreths, water, rock etc).
2. How are they used, for what purpose?
3. What places are named and for what purpose?
4. What is significant about them in this chapter?

#### **Speeches tool**

1. What are all the speeches in the chapter? Who says what and when?
2. What does the narrator say?
3. In the context of chapters 2-6, what is significant about the speeches made here?

#### **Repetition tool**

1. Identify the 'heart' responses that are both called for and described in this chapter (eg 'back to the LORD' 7:2 and 'building an altar to the LORD' 7:17 as two responses).
2. What is the connection between Israel's heart response and the actions that follow?
3. What does Samuel do and say to reinforce and maintain Israel's change of heart?

#### **Contrast tool**

1. What are some obvious contrasts between ch 4:1-18 and ch 7:2-17?
2. What has changed?
3. What is significant about this?

Report back. 3 mins per task.

How would you describe the interactions between Samuel, the people and the LORD? What makes the interactions go well? What causes problems?

In what way do we see Samuel previewing and pointing to the ministry Jesus now?

According to this chapter, what do God's people need for our life with God?

Pray accordingly

Note for leaders (2): Here are some things that hopefully will be drawn out.

### **Objects and places tool**

The objects of v1-8 are all named and spoken of to emphasise Israel's repentance and return to God.

The monument in v12 is given to remind them to keep on renewing their hearts towards God who helps them.

The places Mizpah is a central meeting place for all the house of Israel.

We don't know where Beth Car is. But its obviously a distance away (signally a significant Philistine defeat)

### **Speeches tool**

V3 is a response to Israel (perhaps due to Samuel's word coming to all Israel ch 3:19-4:1)

Israel request a return, and so Samuel calls for a wholehearted repentance and faith of the whole nation.

'with all your hearts' in contrast to superficial.

Israel's speech in v6 is so different from ch 4. (no longer presumptuous)

Israel's cry in v8 is so different from ch 4! (now dependant)

Samuel's stone unveiling speech is to always remind Israel of God.

The narrator's speeches are significant in describing things from the different viewpoints of God, Samuel, and all Israel. V2, v4, esp end of v9, 10. And v13-17. – here is what happens when Priest and people trust the LORD.

### **Repetition**

Lots of heart responses:

Longing, returning, remove gods, set hearts on God, devoted - worship him only, obedience as a result.

Praying to God, pouring out water (a sign of cleansing hearts??) fasting (a sign of true remorse??), confessing (returning in deeds and in word and its all Israel doing this – a shift in the whole culture).

Other heart responses too: fear, cry out (stronger than pray), offering sacrifices to God.

Monument – to help them repeatedly remember God.

Samuel on his circuit (implying willing hearers). Samuel the faithful leader (alter for the LORD in Ramah).

Samuel urges outer change to follow inward heart change.

He puts things in place to reinforce and maintain this new love for the Lord (monument, travelling circuit to keep bringing the word and ways of God to all Israel.

### **Contrast tool**

Israel are not presumptuous but humbled: they don't order God, they turn to God.

They don't charge their defeat to God/ They want Samuel to cry to the LORD our God.

There is no obvious humility towards God in ch 4 (not from Hophni/Phinehas /elders, neither from the people of Beth Shemesh). But now 'all the people of Israel' are united in turning to the LORD.

Rather than fight they pray asking God to rescue

Rather than God delivering them over the LORD answers Samuel's prayer.

Significance: They have had a massive change of heart.

**Interactions?** Could be summarised under the heading 'faithful' or 'devoted' to the LORD.

This is easy to say. Harder to do. Harder still to maintain. Problem: Prone to wander from God...

Pointing forward? Samuel previews Jesus - his faithful interceding (mediating) for the people with God.

Samuel is the leader they need, as Jesus is the leader we need. He is patient, merciful, knows us & loves God.

What do we need? Instruction, correction, patience, forgiveness, help for our wandering hearts.

What causes hearts to wander? The feeling that the 'gods' of others seem to give others what I want and feel I need. When in fact, like Dagon, false gods are false.

What helps? Being constantly reminded that God our heavenly Father is good, he is for us, he is with us and he is keeping us, teaching us, providing for us now, and has prepared eternity for us ahead.