Seemingly Small Sins

A Ten-Week Study of King Saul

Saul didn't lose his kingdom over one huge scandal. He lost it a little at a time: a withheld word, an impatient offering, a half-obeyed command, a jealousy he never dealt with. That's how most of us drift too. Over ten weeks in 1 Samuel, read slowly in the ESV, this study helps people catch the small things before they grow, and points them to Jesus, the King who walked the road Saul wouldn't.

THE TEN WEEKS

01	**LIED**	1 Sam 9–10
02	**CONCEALED**	1 Sam 10:17–24
03	**PRESSURED**	1 Sam 13
04	**BOUND**	1 Sam 14
05	**SPARED**	1 Sam 15:1–23
06	**COVERED**	1 Sam 15:13–31
07	**ENVIED**	1 Sam 18
08	**HUNTED**	1 Sam 19–22
09	**INQUIRED**	1 Sam 28
10	**FALLEN**	1 Sam 31; 2 Sam 1

EVERY SESSION

Mark the Text
Fill-in lines that send the group back into the passage.

Discuss
Questions for the table, from observation to the heart.

Practice
One honest, written step to take this week.

Pray
A verse to pray back to God together.

WHO IT'S FOR

- Sunday school classes
- Small groups
- Youth groups
- Men's and women's ministries

LAUNCH & PRICE

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He has failed publicly in ministry and had to stand before a congregation and confess. He hit rock bottom on the fourth floor of Grace Hospital, and God met him there. That's where the name Fourth Floor Studies comes from.

INSIDE THIS SAMPLE

The cover · Contents: The Shape of the Ten Weeks · The series introduction · Week 1, *Saul Lied*, the complete session from opener to prayer · The Week 5 opener, *Saul Spared*.

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THE KINGS SERIES

VOLUME ONE



SEEMINGLY SMALL SINS

A ten-week study of King Saul

FOURTH FLOOR STUDIES

1 SAMUEL 8–31

SERIES INTRODUCTION

THE SHAPE OF THE TEN WEEKS

Each week we will camp on a single incident, read it slowly in the English Standard Version, and ask what it teaches us about the anatomy of compromise. One crack runs through the whole series. It is not a pile of broken crowns but the same fracture, widening from a quiet silence at home all the way to the slopes of Gilboa.

WK	THE CRACK	THE FOCUS	TEXT
01	**SAUL LIED**	The white lie, a half-truth told to an uncle	1 Sam 9–10
02	**SAUL CONCEALED**	The baggage, where the lot finds a man who will not stand	1 Sam 10:17–24
03	**SAUL PRESSURED**	The altar, seized when he was told to wait	1 Sam 13
04	**SAUL BOUND**	The rash vow, a mouth that binds Israel	1 Sam 14
05	**SAUL SPARED**	The spare, partial obedience against Amalek	1 Sam 15:1–23
06	**SAUL COVERED**	The cover story, blaming the people and keeping the spoil	1 Sam 15:13–31
07	**SAUL ENVIED**	The spear, when another man's praise becomes a weapon	1 Sam 18
08	**SAUL HUNTED**	The hunt, as the spear finds the priests of Nob	1 Sam 19–22
09	**SAUL INQUIRED**	The medium, another voice sought when God is silent	1 Sam 28
10	**SAUL FALLEN**	The sword, where self-trust ends on Gilboa	1 Sam 31; 2 Sam 1

GOSPEL LANDING

We are not collecting Saul's failures so that we can try harder. We are looking at the all-too-common reality for most people: pride cometh before the fall. This volume exists to bring gospel clarity to the small areas of compromise in hopes of keeping saints on the narrow road to glory.

SERIES INTRODUCTION

HOW A KING IS UNDONE

Nobody falls all at once, and that uncomfortable reality is at the heart of this study. Saul did not wake up one morning and decide to reject God. He did not begin as a tyrant, a murderer, or a man who would one day consult a medium in the dark. He began as a choice young man, the kind other men gladly follow. Scripture spends chapter after chapter on his rise, but then we start to see little areas of compromise as the pressure in his life starts to mount.

Over the next ten weeks we will trace Israel's first king through a series of choices that, taken one at a time, hardly look like the stuff of tragedy. He withholds a detail from his uncle and hides when his name is called. He offers a sacrifice he was told to wait for, binds his army with a rash vow, and obeys only part of what God commanded. When he is confronted, he tells a cover story. Later he throws a spear in envy, runs a hunt that ends with the death of priests, seeks out a medium when God is silent, and finally falls on his own sword at Gilboa. No one would say that telling a white lie would lead to killing an entire city of people, being OK with killing your own son, or practicing the dark arts, and yet that is exactly where these choices lead. Saul is not undone by one great sin. *He is undone by the accumulated weight of many seemingly small ones*, each of which trained his heart a little further away from the God who anointed him.

These sins seem small because we, like Saul, are conditioned to measure sin by its visible size rather than by what it reveals about the heart. James puts it this way:

> **JAMES 2:10** (ESV)
>
> For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.

James is not saying that every sin carries the same earthly consequence. He is saying that every sin, however small, is the same rebellion in miniature, because in that moment the creature decides that it knows better than the Creator. Saul's story shows us what happens when that miniature rebellion is rehearsed until it becomes a settled disposition of the heart. James is also making clear some other profound truths in this one verse. First, when we sin against God, it makes us legally full of all guilt before a holy God. Secondly, James reminds us that when we are guilty of lying, it really means we are guilty of idolatry too. If we are guilty of making an idol for ourselves, we are guilty of adultery against God. The commands are interchangeable in their root place of rebellion in our hearts. Jesus puts it this way:

> **LUKE 16:10** (ESV)
>
> One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

This is what we see play out in Saul's life and oftentimes in our own, if we are honest. Through the next ten weeks we are going to take a journey through Saul's life and see these things, but it's my hope that you will take a journey through your own life as well. Look for the small areas of compromise that don't seem problematic now but, unchecked and left without serious examination before our loving God, can lead to painful consequences later. Sin takes you further than you wanted to go, keeps you longer than you wanted to stay, and costs you more than you wanted to pay.

At the end of each week, we will focus back in on the beautiful gospel to be reminded of our hope in Christ.

SERIES INTRODUCTION

THE SLOW FRACTURE

The cover of each week carries the same crown. In Week 1 it bears a single hairline crack, and with each session that crack runs a little farther, until in Week 10 the crown lies in pieces. Keep this picture in mind as you go, because none of these sins arrived as a catastrophe, and yet each one widened the same crack.

TEACHING DIAGRAM

THE SLOW FRACTURE

Saul's crown did not shatter in a day. Each "small" compromise widened the same crack.



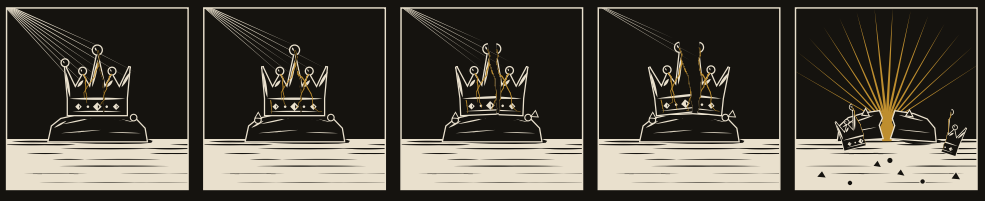
WEEK 01
LIED
a half-truth to his uncle
1 SAM 10:16

WEEK 02
CONCEALED
among the baggage
1 SAM 10:22

WEEK 03
PRESSURED
the seized altar
1 SAM 13:12

WEEK 04
BOUND
a rash vow
1 SAM 14:24

WEEK 05
SPARED
the best kept back
1 SAM 15:9



WEEK 06
COVERED
the cover story
1 SAM 15:20

WEEK 07
ENVIED
a spear for David
1 SAM 18:11

WEEK 08
HUNTED
the priests of Nob
1 SAM 22:18

WEEK 09
INQUIRED
the medium at Endor
1 SAM 28:7

WEEK 10
FALLEN
his own sword
1 SAM 31:4

The light fades week by week, and it returns only through the split rock.

SEEMINGLY SMALL SINS | A GUIDED SCRIPTURE JOURNAL

HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

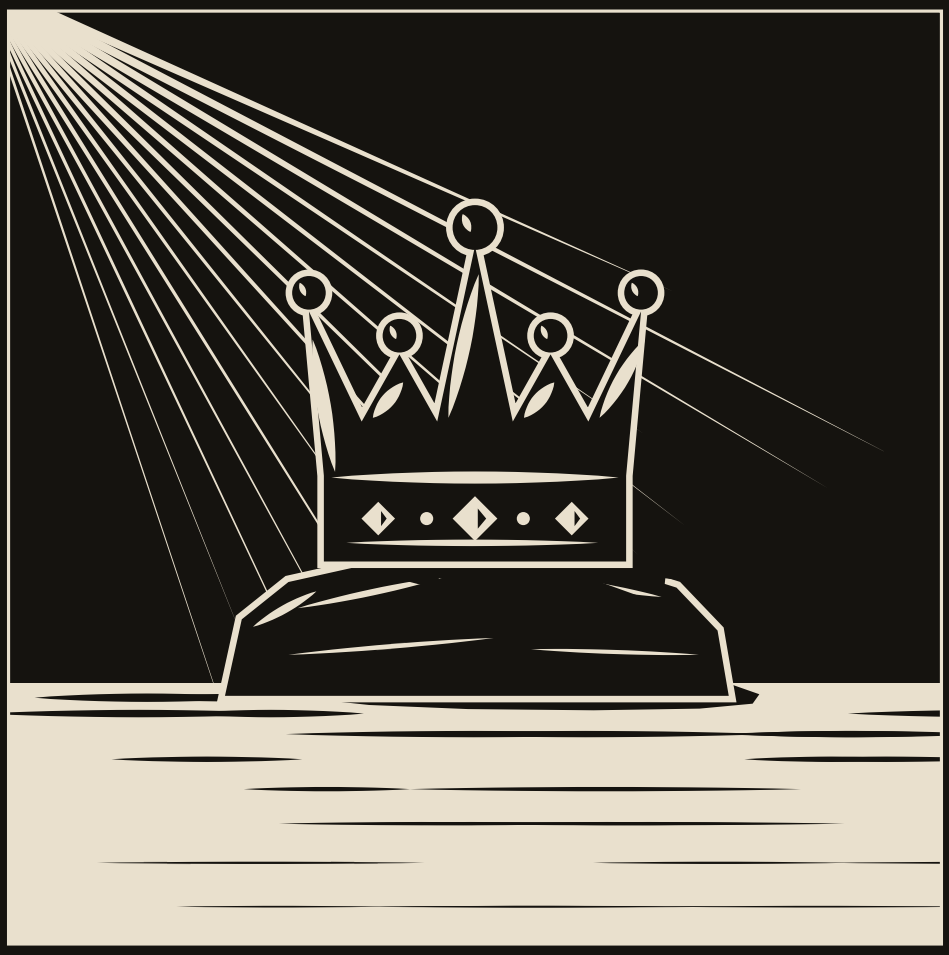
In this ten-week study on the life of King Saul, we are meant to see some of our own potentially "subtle" sins that we tend to make allowances for because we believe the lie that they "aren't that bad." This study is meant to be journaled through so that the Scriptures can come alive and the lesson can make it to your heart and life and not just your head.

- **Bring a pen.** Underline, circle, and argue in the margin, so that the Word can do its work in you and through you.
- **The left column is yours.** Use it for whatever the Spirit prompts you to write as you read.
- **Fill in the blanks** so that you have something to return to and review later.
- **Then talk. Read the teaching before you come, from the week title through The Gospel. At the table, Mark the Text, Discuss, Practice, and Pray. Reread one passage aloud, then take the heart question and the gospel question. The questions are written for a real group around a real table, not for a six-hour lecture. Think of the teaching as the meal; the discussion comes after you have been given something to chew on.**
- **Do the practice.** Saul's first crack appeared in a private conversation, and integrity is won or lost in the same quiet places every week.

This whole study is headed for the gospel, not for moral panic. We are not gathering Saul's failures so that we can resolve to try harder. We are being walked toward Jesus, who bore our shame, who never hid, and who meets our insufficiency at the cross.

Ten weeks. Each week takes up one compromise, beginning with a half-truth told to an uncle and ending with a king fallen on his own sword and finished off by one of the very people he had been told to destroy.

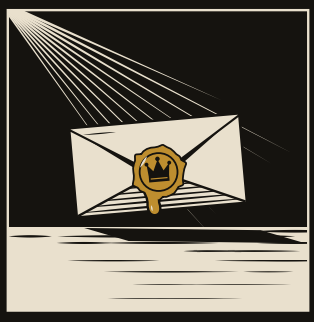
The series is written by Robbie Kropiwnicki.



SESSION 01 · 1 SAMUEL 9–10

SAUL LIED

It was never about the donkeys



THE SEALED WORD · 1 SAM 10:16

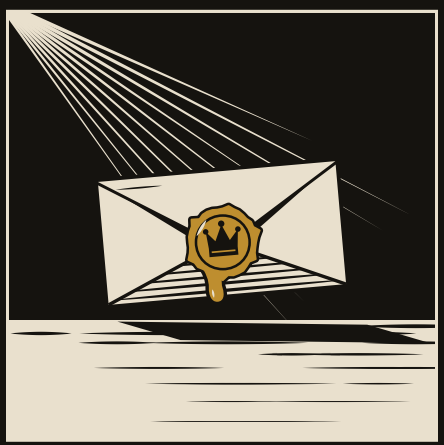
WEEK 01:

SAUL LIED

Read before you come: this page through The Gospel. At the table: Mark the Text, Discuss, Practice, and Pray.

SESSION 01 · 1 SAMUEL 9–10

It was never about the donkeys



THE SEALED WORD · 1 SAMUEL 10:16

The word of the kingdom was poured out on him, and he kept his mouth sealed.

WHY THIS STUDY

Saul did not fall in a single night. He went out looking for his father's lost donkeys, never suspecting that God, in His sovereignty, was already walking him toward the prophet Samuel and a vial of oil to anoint him king of Israel.

God's hand was on the search for those lost donkeys from the start. That is why it mattered so much for Saul to trust God's plan instead of shrinking back from it.

This week we watch the first crack appear in the crown.

> *A man tells his wife he ran into an old friend. He mentions the coffee. He does not mention the hour in the car. The donkeys got a sentence. The kingdom did not. That is how a white lie starts, not with a scandal, but with the costly part left on the cutting-room floor.*

YOUR NOTES

THE ERRAND

Kish's donkeys have wandered off, so Saul takes a servant and sets out through the hill country. They search Ephraim, then Shalishah, then Shaalim, and finally the land of Benjamin, but the animals are nowhere to be found. When the search begins to cost more than it seems worth, Saul wants to turn back so that his father will not start worrying about them.

Saul went looking for donkeys and came home a king. Some of us can't even find our car keys.

> **1 SAMUEL 9:3–5** (ESV)
>
> 3 Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. So Kish said to Saul his son, "Take one of the young men with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys."
>
> 4 And he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find them. And they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then they passed through the land of Benjamin, but did not find them.
>
> 5 When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come, let us go back, lest my father cease to care about the donkeys and become anxious about us."

Here we see Saul being told by his father to go look for his lost donkeys. Saul and a servant begin on a journey to find the donkeys, and after passing through four different places the donkeys were nowhere to be found. I love how the Lord uses donkeys to fulfill His purposes. He did it with Balaam, and now He is doing it here again. God takes ordinary dumb animals to fulfill His beautiful sovereign design.

> *It was never about the donkeys.*

LOOKING FOR THE SEER

After a while Saul's servant pipes up about a man of God who lives in the city, and everything he says comes to pass, so maybe he can help us with our donkey dilemma. Saul does not know the seer, but the seer already knows about Saul. Notice the timing: a full day before they

YOUR NOTES

arrived, God had told Samuel that a Benjamite was coming and that he was to anoint him prince.

Now we are beginning to see the real reason for the lost donkeys:

> **1 SAMUEL 9:6, 15–21** (ESV)
>
> 6 But he said to him, "Behold, there is a man of God in this city, and he is a man who is held in honor; all that he says comes true. So now let us go there. Perhaps he can tell us the way we should go."
>
> 15 Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed to Samuel:
>
> 16 "Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me."
>
> 17 When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, "Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He it is who shall restrain my people."
>
> 18 Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, "Tell me where is the house of the seer?"
>
> 19 Samuel answered Saul, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for today you shall eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is on your mind.
>
> 20 As for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's house?"
>
> 21 Saul answered, "Am I not a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel? And is not my clan the humblest of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then have you spoken to me in this way?"

Samuel begins with a promise to Saul, then he promises Saul a special word, and assures him that the donkeys have been found. Then he raises a question that has nothing to do with livestock, and Saul answers by pointing to his own smallness. This is where the story of a father-prophet and a reluctant king begins. Linger here for a moment, because the relationship begins before the oil ever touches Saul's head.

THE ANOINTING

Samuel sends the servant on ahead. Then come the oil and a kiss, and a word spoken where no crowd can change it, declaring that God has anointed Saul prince over his heritage. Even the recovered donkeys become a sign for him on the road home.

YOUR NOTES

1 SAMUEL 9:27–10:2 (ESV)

27 As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to pass on before us, and when he has passed on, stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the word of God."

1 Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you to be prince over his heritage.

2 When you depart from me today, you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah, and they will say to you, 'The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has ceased to care about the donkeys and is anxious about you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?"'

1 SAMUEL 10:6 (ESV)

Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man.

Before we race ahead, a brief caution is in order. When the Spirit comes *upon* people in the Old Testament, especially for kingship and other offices, it is typically an empowering for a task rather than the permanent, regenerating indwelling that believers receive under the New Covenant. We see this pattern in the judges, and we see it in 1 Samuel 16:14, where that empowering is later withdrawn from Saul. *Gifting is not the same thing as godliness*. Saul can be outwardly changed for a season and still, over time, resist the very surrender the gift was meant to serve.

So we have a prophet who has already heard from God, a young man still counting livestock, and a vial of oil poured out. The bond between Samuel and Saul is real, and later it will fracture, but let's not rush there. For now, sit with the picture of honor poured out on a man who still thinks the story is about donkeys.

YOUR NOTES

THE LIE

Saul returns home, and his uncle asks a perfectly ordinary question. Watch closely what Saul reports and what he refuses to report. This is not an empty moment in the story, because here, in the middle of a family conversation, the first crack appears.

> **1 SAMUEL 10:14–16** (ESV)
>
> 14 Saul's uncle said to him and to his servant, "Where did you go?"
>
> And he said, "To seek the donkeys. And when we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel."
>
> 15 And Saul's uncle said, "Please tell me what Samuel said to you."
>
> 16 And Saul said to his uncle, "He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found." But about the matter of the kingdom, of which Samuel had spoken, he did not tell him anything.

The narrator is blunt. Saul speaks freely about the donkeys and says nothing at all about the kingdom. He does not invent a fake trip; he simply tells the safe part of his story. He doesn't mind sharing about the ordinary believable parts of the journey. That is often how concealment begins. It rarely starts with a scandal and far more often starts with one withheld sentence with a single relative.

The oil is still on his head, the kiss is still fresh, and the word of God is still on his lips. Yet when the first person asks what Samuel said, Saul lies about the encounter and reveals some important realities about his character and identity.

> *He spoke freely about the donkeys and kept silent about the kingdom.*

THE FIRST CRACK

Integrity is rarely tested first on a battlefield. It is tested in a kitchen, on a walk, in a text message, or in a room with one person who asks what happened.

God's hand was already on the errand, and that is why this silence matters. Trusting the plan would have meant standing in the call even

YOUR NOTES

when you weren't yet sure what others would think, or even what you thought about the situation.

Reading the silence. Scripture does not tell us why Saul held this back, so any answer we give is an inference from the pattern that emerges later in his life. Even so, that pattern is instructive, and it suggests several possible motives.

- **Fear of exposure before he felt ready.** Announcing "I have been made king" would have invited scrutiny from a family that had just watched him chase donkeys.
- **A desire to control the narrative.** Silence kept the timing of the news in his own hands, which is image management rather than walking in the light.
- **Genuine uncertainty that curdled into self-protection.** Uncertainty is not sin, but Saul does not seek counsel; instead, he seals the matter shut.

The common thread running through each of these is self-protection chosen over self-disclosure. Years later, when Samuel confronts him over Amalek, Saul will name this very fear himself (1 Samuel 15:24). John saw the same fear keep believers silent in Jesus' day.

> JOHN 12:42–43 (ESV)
>
> 42 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue;
>
> 43 for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

The fear of people does not begin when the spear is already in the air. What we see in Week 1 is the seed of what we will see in Week 6, the same sin at work in a smaller room. Three older voices help us see it clearly.

YOUR NOTES

"Lying is a sin that does not go alone; it ushers in other sins."
— THOMAS WATSON

"We fear men so much, because we fear God so little."
— WILLIAM GURNALL

"What God says is best, is best, though all the men in the world are against it."
— JOHN BUNYAN

Watson shows that a lie never travels alone, Gurnall names its root, and Bunyan points to the better road. The call of this study is not to try harder at telling the truth but to live in a Christlike dependence on Him and what he says about you.

SMALL WITHHOLDINGS

Scripture offers other examples of the same principle, namely that the size of a concealment does not determine the size of its consequence. What is really at stake is the posture of our hearts toward God.

Achan (Joshua 7). A hidden garment and a modest weight of silver and gold, kept back from what had been devoted to God, brought defeat on the whole camp. The goods themselves were not catastrophic. The concealment was, because it struck directly at covenant trust.

Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11). As Peter reminds them in verse 4, they were free to keep back any portion of the proceeds. Their sin was not the withholding of money but the withholding of the truth about it, presenting a partial gift as though it were the whole.

In every case the pattern matches what we see in Saul, a small and private editing of the truth, offered to protect the self at the very moment when candor was called for.

> ACTS 5:4 (ESV)
> While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.

YOUR NOTES

> *"In a strict sense, there is no sin little, because no little God to sin against."*
> — THOMAS BROOKS

Brooks's words cut beneath all our careful managing of the truth.

A NECESSARY CAUTION

We must be careful not to overstate the claim. This study is not arguing that Saul's withholding in 10:16 mechanically caused his death on Gilboa, as though sin worked like a row of dominoes with no room for grace. God gives Saul repeated exits through Samuel's confrontations, the Spirit's dealings, and David's restraint. Saul's story is not one without exits; it is the story of exits repeatedly declined.

What 10:16 gives us, then, is not the mechanical cause of his ruin but its diagnostic first symptom, the earliest visible sign of a heart pattern that he will be given many chances and much grace to abandon and unfortunately will not.

> *It was the first symptom, not his fate.*

THE OTHER ROAD

AN EXERCISE IN IMAGINATION

Imagine for a minute that Saul tells his uncle the whole word. It would not need to be a performance or a boast, only the plain truth that the donkeys have been found and that God has anointed him prince over his heritage. The oil was never a secret to be managed, and the call was never something to hide until it felt safe.

Imagine a first king of Israel who fears God more than others, who does not shrink from the plan that found him on an errand he never chose, and who lets a private word become a public life before the fracture ever has a chance to start. Samuel's kiss would have had somewhere to land, and the bond that will later tear might have become a road instead of a wound.

Of course, we are only imagining. The text does not give us that Saul. The point of the other road is not to rewrite 1 Samuel. It is to help us feel the weight of the road Saul actually took, and to admit that a cleaned-up Saul is not what we need.

YOUR NOTES

We do not need a version of this man who finally tried harder. We need the King who actually walked the good road, the One who did not conceal the Father's word to survive a conversation, who bore shame rather than managing a smaller story, and who spoke the truth from the inward parts when the room would have rewarded silence.

THE GOSPEL

This is where all ten weeks are headed. The destination is not a cleaner Saul, nor a man who learns to be more honest through sheer grit, but our insufficiency met at the cross. Jesus takes the concealed sentences, the fear of others, and the donkey story we tell whenever the kingdom story would cost us something.

> **COLOSSIANS 2:13–14** (ESV)
>
> And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

He nailed our insufficiency to the cross, and then He came out of the grave. The point is not to try harder to be honest. The call is to a Christlike dependence, His life at work in us rather than grit with a Bible verse on top. We belong to a better King, and His life in us is already the end of our hiding. So, let's look to Jesus when we begin to fear what others might think or when a curious question into our lives might reveal something about us we may feel insecure about.

YOUR NOTES

SLOW DOWN AND WRITE IT IN

MARK THE TEXT

Complete these statements from 1 Samuel 9–10, and let the exercise draw you back into the text.

01.

Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were _____, and Saul still thought the errand was about livestock.

02.

Saul said, "Come, let us go back, lest my father cease to care about the donkeys and become _____ about us."

03.

Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had _____ to Samuel.

04.

"You shall anoint him to be _____ over my people Israel."

05.

Saul answered, "Am I not a _____, from the least of the tribes of Israel?"

06.

Samuel poured oil on his head and kissed him and said, "The LORD has anointed you to be prince over his _____."

07.

Saul said to his uncle, "He told us plainly that the donkeys had been _____."

08.

But about the matter of the _____, of which Samuel had spoken, he did not tell him anything.

A half-truth is not a small truth; it is the full word of God with the costly part cut away.

YOUR NOTES

FOR THE TABLE

DISCUSS

01

Observe. Walk back through this week's four Scripture passages. What did Saul think he was looking for, and what had God already set in motion before he arrived? Stay in 1 Samuel 9–10 for a while before you begin to interpret him.

02

The heart. Where do you see fear of people, fear of the call, or a shrinking back from God's plan in Saul's silence toward his uncle? And where do you see that same pattern in your own life?

03

Samuel. The prophet heard from God first, the young man was out looking for livestock, and Samuel met him with honor, oil, a kiss, and a private word. What does all of that tell us is already true of their relationship?

04

The other road. If Saul had told his uncle the whole word, what might have begun to be true of Israel's first king? Keep your answer in the realm of imagination, and then talk together about why we still need a better King.

05

The gospel. Jesus forgave all our trespasses and nailed the record that stood against us to the cross. How does His sufficiency at the cross free you from needing to lie or hide?

YOUR NOTES

PRACTICE

Name one place recently where you withheld the whole truth or found yourself shrinking back from God's Spirit leading you. Try to write it down as a full sentence. No one will be asked to share it.

The donkey story I keep telling is

PRAY

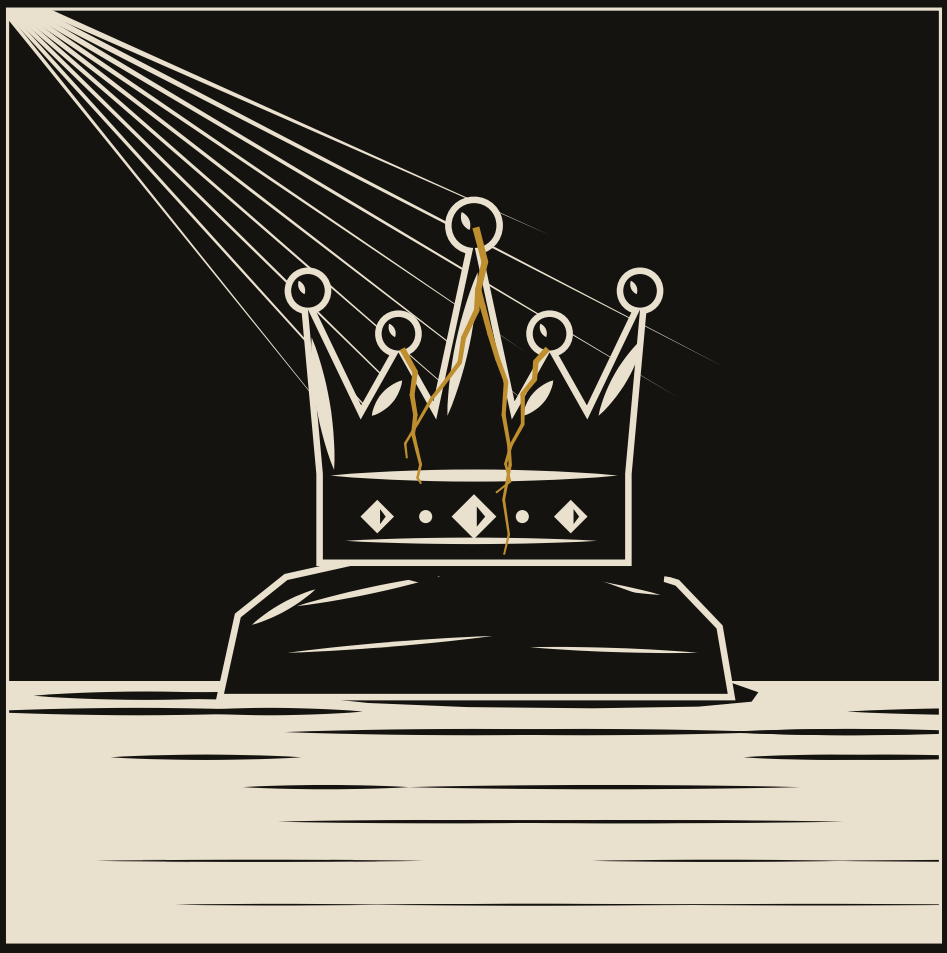
Pray this verse back to God. Ask Him to make your hidden conversations as holy as your public ones, and to put His own life in the place where your fear of others used to sit.

> **PSALM 51:6** (ESV)
> Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

NEXT WEEK

Next week the call goes public. When the lot falls on Saul, he is not standing with the people but hiding among the baggage. The man who would not tell the whole truth now will not show himself.

Read ahead: 1 Samuel 10:17–24.



SESSION 05 · 1 SAMUEL 15:1–23

SAUL SPARED

He kept what God said to destroy



A MONUMENT · 1 SAM 15:12

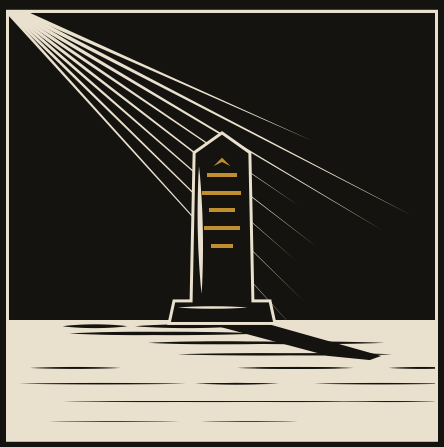
WEEK 05:

SAUL SPARED

Read before you come: this page through The Gospel. At the table: Mark the Text, Discuss, Practice, and Pray.

SESSION 05 · 1 SAMUEL 15:1–23

He kept what God said to destroy



A MONUMENT FOR HIMSELF · 1 SAMUEL 15:12

He kept what God said to destroy. The crack already running through the crown now runs through what he kept.

WHY THIS WEEK

The mouth that bound Israel will now fail to finish God's word against Amalek. Last week haste put on zeal and laid a curse on hungry men. This week Samuel reminds Saul what God remembers from Deuteronomy, and the king who hears a clear command keeps what God said to destroy.

Saul spares a king, and he spares the best of the flocks. He destroys only the refuse, sets up a monument for himself, and then calls it obedience—though the word was to spare none and devote all.

Sparing is not mercy when God has said to destroy; it is self-trust keeping back a share. What lies in the balance is God's character—does He always do what He promises? This week is the fifth crack.

> *You clean the garage and keep the one box you were told to throw out, then you tell your wife the job is done. The box is in the trunk. Saul destroyed the refuse and kept the best, and then he called the leftovers obedience. The thing you spare is the thing that will bleat when the prophet walks in.*