

Talk It Over 45: Bible Study Edition

Teaching Series: *The Story*

Message: Standing Tall—Falling Hard (*Chapter 10*) — Todd Petkau

Passages: 1 Samuel 1-4; 8-13; 15

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How to use Talk It Over

This version of Talk It Over is designed for groups whose primary focus is studying the Word of God. There is lots of depth in information and questions about the principle passage of the weekend message. This study is designed to be done in 30 to 60 minutes. To take full advantage of the TiO created for our exploration of *The Story* it is recommended that you do the following (in this order): 1) Read the associated chapter in *The Story*; 2) Watch the sermon for the chapter; 3) Gather as a small group and talk together using this document as your guide. Because each chapter in *The Story* contains only pieces of the books of the Bible, please check out page 494-495 to see what parts of the Bible are actually being referenced.

The Main Idea

The people of Israel demanded a king and God gave them one. And this changed the course of the history of the people of Israel for centuries. And it all started with Samuel and Saul.

Warm Up Questions: (Choose 1 or 2)

Q1: Without escalating to physical violence with others in your group, talk about how do you feel about Canada retaining its connections to the monarchy of Great Britain?

Q2: If you were “King of the World” and you had the ability to make one law, what would it be?

Q3: Given that being a monarch comes with it a lot of obligations and protocols and restrictions, if you had the choice to be a royal, would you? For example, would you marry into the royal family of Great Britain?

Dig a Little Deeper

In the narrative of the Old Testament, the books of 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel follow a connected story with Judges. So, as we begin the story of Samuel Israel is being led by the second-last judge, Eli the priest. But chapter 10 of *The Story* is not about Eli, it is focussed on Samuel, the last judge, and the transition to the Kingdom of Israel with Saul as king.

Act 1: The Birth of Samuel (pp. 129-131)

“So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I asked the LORD for him.’”

During the judgeship of Eli we meet Hannah, one of two wives of Elkanah. Despite the love that Elkanah had for Hannah, she could not have children. Hannah bargained with God: if he would give her a son then she would give this child back to God as his servant. In the course of time, God granted Hannah her desire and she gave birth to a son who she named Samuel. True to her word, Hannah took Samuel to the temple and, explaining her vow to Eli, left Samuel in Eli’s care to serve in the temple.

Act 2: Samuel the Judge (pp. 131-135)

“The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD. The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.”

Eli was punished for his sin and the sins of his sons and when he died Samuel became judge and prophet in Israel. But as Samuel grew old the people of Israel rejected his sons as leaders because of their sin and corruption.

Act 3: The Choosing of a King (pp. 135-138)

“So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, ‘You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.’”

The nation of Israel had, to this point, been distinct from the other nations. Rather than a king, who ruled them they were ruled by God, who guided judges. But, using the corruption of Samuel’s sons as an excuse for change the people demanded a king. And so God gave them what they wanted, warning them, through Samuel, that in giving them what they asked for they would get far more (or less) than they anticipated. Samuel, guided by God began a search for a king in Israel. This search culminated in the choosing of Saul to be king.

Act 4: Saul the King (pp. 139-143)

“And you will realize what an evil thing you did in the eyes of the LORD when you asked for a king.”

Saul was not all bad. But his reign suffered from two things: first, God did not bless the nation because they had sinned in asking for a king in the first place; and second, Saul was not very wise and he made bad choices at almost every turn. Chapter 10 ends with Saul disobeying God and sparing the Amalekites, thus setting up a transition to a new and better king.

Looking back at the story of Samuel and Saul, the primary theme is “be careful what you ask for”. When the people demanded a King they seemed to believe that this would make them successful and would allow them to avoid the issues that came with the corruption of the judges and their families. But God warned them of two things:

1) Demanding a King was a rejection of God: God made it clear that by choosing a King the people of Israel were rejecting the leadership model that God had put into place. He wanted to lead them through the guidance of judges who clearly saw and demonstrated the supremacy of God. But the people rejected that: they wanted a king like the other nations had.

Q1: In comparing the leadership of a judge (like Samuel) to a king (like Saul), what differences do you see between the way each led—try to stick to judge vs king rather than comparing Samuel to Saul.

Q2: Why did God want judges as leaders rather than kings?

2) Demanding a King was a longing to be like the other nations: As the people of Israel entered the promised land God cleared a way for them and cleansed the land so that they could live as a holy (set apart) people. But not all of the nations who lived in Canaan were removed and there was constant communication and intermarrying between Israel and the other nations. So, not only did they get exposed to the religions of the other nations but also to their systems of government: overwhelmingly monarchies.

Q3: What were the pitfalls in Israel wanting to be like other nations?

Next Steps

Having a king has its advantages. Kings make clear rules and are there to interpret them for us. Kings provide us with a sense of identity. But most importantly, kings are tangible, we can touch them and see them. And so we choose our kings. We want to be like the other nations and so we choose kings of money and ideology. And too often we either reject God or we move him down in importance and ask him to fall in line with our real kings. We set up money as king and then ask God to bless our money-making projects. We set up a particular political ideology as king and then we ask that God would make that ideology supreme. We set up the pursuit of pleasure as our king and then ask that God bless the things that we pursue. We rarely think about these as kings in our lives but, as Bob Dylan said, “you gotta serve somebody”. God does not say that money or power or fame or politics or pleasure are wrong, what he does say is that they are not to be king in his place.

Q1: How do you demonstrate the Kingship of God in your life?

There have been debates in the recent history of the followers of Jesus about how we describe our place in the world. We use the word “Christian” to describe who we are and then a million other words to describe what we do.

Q2: Is there a difference between a Christian who is a politician and a politician who is a Christian?

Does one of these phrases more accurately describe Biblical kingship?

If you substitute your role in society—doctor, carpenter, student, mother, executive—for “politician” in the question, does that change your approach to the role (or roles) you have?

Pray that you would discover how God’s kingship can be made visible in your life.