

Listen to What Women Who Have Completed Living With Unmet Desires Have Said:

"[The study has] helped me to understand more clearly how jealousy does affect my life, how to identify jealousy and know how God desires me to respond! Thank you. So many things have changed my life."

"This study is a humbling experience that provides hope for the desperate and mercy for the jealous heart. It gave me a new perspective on the "curse" that jealousy places on both the perpetrator and the victim. I had never considered how my jealousy towards others caused them pain."

"Shawn is a woman filled with the Holy Spirit that is poured out of her each time she teaches. I have never been so drawn into a bible story as when she is reading aloud from the bible. Her passion and understanding of the bible has left me craving more!"

"I have looked deeper into my own heart to uncover jealousy that I have not seen before and I have learned how to recognize jealousy in others."

"The study helped me recognize jealousy and other emotions tied to jealousy in my life so now I can confess those to God and claim His promises."

"I learned so much about scripture! I learned so much about myself and the reasons people (especially me!) react the way they do."

"Shawn is the type of speaker that you sit on the edge of your seat while she talks."

"I haven't really thought of myself as a jealous person—in our everyday understanding of what jealousy means—but I have really felt convicted in this study in a good way."

"So powerful... it forced me to answer the hard questions."

"This study helped me in healing [as a victim] of jealousy."

"I really enjoyed this study and can tell [Shawn] put a lot of thought and prayer into this. Thank you for sharing the study with us."

"On a personal level, this study has revealed to me not only the times I have been the victim of jealousy, but the times I have been the perpetrator... The study has shown me through God's Word the rewards of living in obedience to God and 'the safest place I can possibly be is in the center of God's will.' [The study] has shown me [the] bitter root that can hinder the abundant life Christ has for me in John 10:10."

Living with Unmet Desires



EXPOSING THE MANY
FACES OF JEALOUSY

Shawn Lantz



Nashville, Tennessee



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DEDICATION



To my beloved friend and sister-in-law, Karen Lowe:

You and I have been in each other's lives since I married your brother almost two decades ago. Our relationship was once a classic tale of competition and misunderstanding between two women who observed each other through jealousy's sightless and unmerciful eyes.

The Lord has healed what used to be broken between us. You were the first one to hear these ideas before they ever became lessons in a Bible study. You were not afraid to give me honest feedback with your questions as you lavished encouragement on me in the process. You were my sounding board, my prayer partner, and my friend through it all. I cannot pay the debt I owe you for the hours of intense prayer we have shared throughout the writing of this study.

It is because of what has happened between us that I know Jesus Christ can transform a relationship, once based on jealousy, to one which thrives on love and mutual respect. Because of you, I know that He is able to reconcile two people through His scandalous, extravagant grace and knit their once-distant hearts together. I know that you join me in giving Him all the glory. A marriage made us sisters-in-law, but you are now, and always will remain, my friend by choice.

I love you dearly, Karen,

Shawn

Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:5-6 (NKJV)





Shawn's Gratitude List

I owe so much to the following persons for their support and encouragement:

My Lord Jesus Christ: Thank You for the gift of Your presence which I am learning to be jealous for more than anything I could possess in this life. Help me, dear Jesus, to continue to learn the truth that You are what I am seeking more than any temporary pleasure or possession this world could give me. You are the treasure—You and only You. Take this study and be glorified. Show us all what godly jealousy looks like and give us the hearts to pursue Your jealous love for us with Your power.

My man, Rob and my three children: Rob, the fact that this project has seen the light of day is due to your constant encouragement and belief that its message should be heard. Your confidence has overshadowed my timidity. Your loyalty has given me courage. I have been blessed beyond anything else in my life to be your wife. Whatever life throws at us, your coming alongside me through this process assures me that I have a true companion in you. I love you more than I can possibly express. You are the only one for me. Chase, Jordyn, and Jenna, you have been so patient with this process. I love you so much.

My parents, Jim and Nancy Smith: From my earliest memories, you had a relationship with Jesus that I envied. You are both the real deal. Anything good that comes from this study is fruit from your ministry to me as your daughter. You are examples of generosity and lives poured out as drink offerings. Thank you for the hours you spent in editing and praying for this study. I love you both.

My entire, extraordinary Word family: Special thanks to Mark Funderburg, Alan, Jim, Marty, Dusty, Ricky, Heather, Todd, Kevin, Tom, Josh, and John and three of the coolest college interns on the planet: Sarah, Mandi, and Garrett. You are my coworkers in the gospel and I cannot tell you how proud I am to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with all of you as we attempt to make Jesus famous.

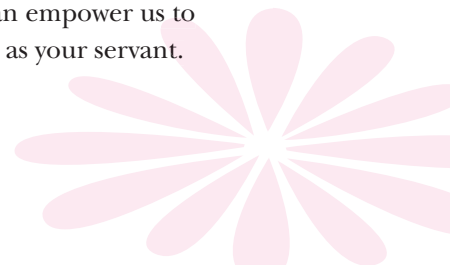
My Bible study groups at Forest Hills Baptist Church and First Presbyterian Church of Trenton, Michigan: You ladies are so precious to me. Thank you for being willing to do this study to see if the material “worked.” Your insight and input were invaluable in the process. I love you all so much!

My two spiritual teachers who, long before I took my first breath, were promoted to their heavenly reward, Matthew Henry and Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Meeting these two righteous men on the other side of eternity will be one of the greatest joys I can imagine. I cannot say it any better than Scripture regarding the debt I owe for the insight that God gave these two men who dedicated their lives to the Word of God:

“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”
Daniel 12:3

To Jackie McClure and Jackie Mayberry of JCI Design: Thank you for making black words on a white page look so beautiful. You have made the process a delight. Thank you for your creative talent which makes a hard topic of study beautiful in its presentation. You are the best!

My wonderful participants: You are the reason for this study. I have prayed much for you through the writing of these lessons. Although I may never meet you in person, the Lord has allowed me to see your faces in my mind's eye as the inspiration for the nine weeks we will spend together in His Word. My prayer is that you and I will be voices who testify that Jesus Christ can empower us to live at peace with our unmet desires. I come to you as a sinner saved by grace and as your servant. Thank you for taking this journey with me!



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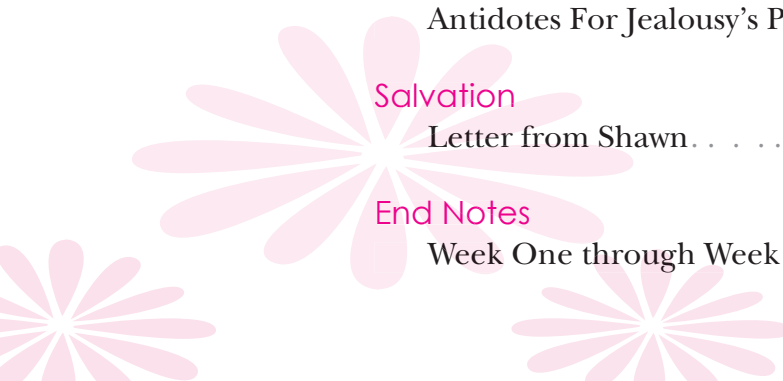
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INTRODUCTION



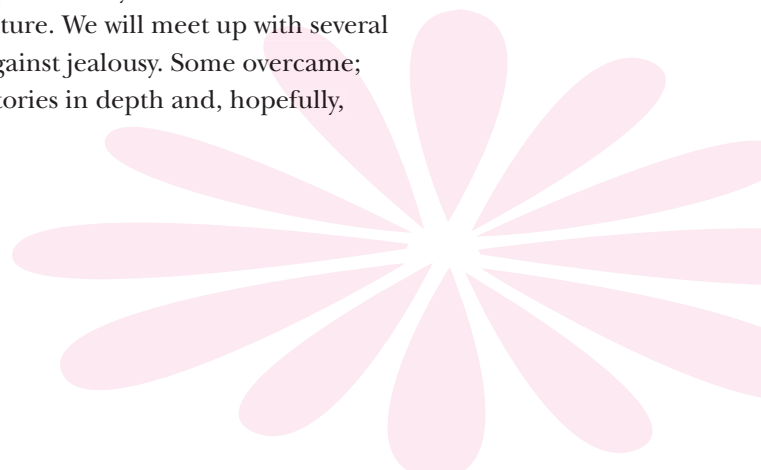
Jealousy


There are places emotionally and physically that I have not been able to empathize with in my life experience. Jealousy, however, has been something in which I have been both a perpetrator and victim, even at the same time. There have been seasons in my life in which I have allowed the green-eyed monster to take over my mind and control my every thought. I have noticed that no matter how much I may grow in my relationship to Jesus Christ, I have to battle jealous thoughts on a regular basis. Over the past two years, my struggle has been confirmed as universal through conversations with some of my dearest and most transparent friends. Through the vulnerability of our conversations, the Lord started putting this study on my heart. I am honored beyond measure to have you share this journey with me.

Have you ever set out to study a subject that intrigued you but, through the process of exploration, you discover that you will never exhaust the material? This is what I have found to be true with the topic of jealousy. I have found that jealousy wears many faces. In fact, without the light of God's Word illuminating this character flaw, I have often mistaken its face for a different sin.

A key discovery the Lord has allowed me to realize is that jealousy is a symptom of a broken heart. In the first week of this study, we will examine four core heart issues. I believe that unbelief in any one of these major areas beckons jealous thoughts through the door of our hearts. Jealousy is sinister because it covers up the true source of the problem. I think this is why we are puzzled and dismayed by our unwholesome thoughts and actions toward others. We can understand that we do not think well of others, but cannot necessarily understand why. Because we lack this knowledge, we can never really get to the root of the problem and deal with our feelings in a God-honoring way. The result is pure devastation in our relationships.



Our gracious God has given us story after story of real flesh and blood who engaged in this battle before us. Some have been blindsided with jealousy's cunning and have failed miserably in the fight. Some have been tripped up, but recovered, and were the wiser for the wounding. By looking at the narrative of a life story we will be able to ponder why the individual made the choices he or she did in the light of Scripture. We will meet up with several Biblical heroes and examine their own war against jealousy. Some overcame; others were overcome. We will look at their stories in depth and, hopefully, learn to make their victories our own.





Solomon, the wisest king of Israel, wrote the following words in Proverbs 4:23:

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”

Each week, you will have five days of homework to complete on your own. In each day of homework, you will notice a pink flower  next to the key question of the day’s lesson and a black mirror  next to the reflective question. You can use these two questions to encourage discussion if you meet with others in a group setting. These activities are meant to help you apply the lesson being taught in each day’s homework to your own life. These are only suggestions. Feel free to let the Holy Spirit guide your discussions with others about the material. You are always at liberty to share as much as you feel comfortable revealing to others.

I have begged the Lord to empower us to know how to obey Solomon’s charge better as we seek to guard our hearts, with the realization that Jesus Christ lives inside of our hearts. I want my heart, His temple, to be one that is not as easily entangled by sin’s deception. This is my prayer for all of us as we uncover the many faces of jealousy. May we start this journey with the following encouragement from Hebrews 12:1-3 (The Message):

Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we’d better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he’s there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!

Be glorified, Lord Jesus, and speak to each of our hearts!

Four Core Issues of a Jealous Heart

I was experiencing some frightening symptoms related to my stomach several years ago. I kept putting off going to the doctor because, frankly, I was terrified about what he might tell me was the cause for the painful burning sensation I felt daily. Finally, when I became more desperate to know the cause of the pain than to continue living in denial over the symptoms, I scheduled an appointment to find out what was wrong.

Jealousy is not the problem. Jealousy is a symptom of a broken heart. There are four core issues of a jealous heart that we are going to examine in depth this week in our study. If you, like me, are finally ready to get at the root of this destructive character flaw, God is ready and waiting to open our eyes. Within the pages of His Word, He has given us a fabulous flesh and blood example of a woman who struggled with jealousy's poison and was victorious in the fight. Although she may be a familiar figure to you, I pray that you will see her with new eyes this week.

We need more than our natural eye's ability to see as we embark on this very important foundational week of study. I would like to pray the words of the apostle Paul as we begin to uncover the real cause of our jealousy:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe...

Ephesians 1:17-19



WEEK ONE



Day One: A Matter of Trust

It was October 27, 1984, and my sister, Nicol, and I were attending a school friend's birthday party. We all lived in the sub-Saharan African country of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), where resources were scarce. Janet was turning sweet sixteen and what her parents lacked in resources, they made up for in creativity by way of games and food for the celebration. The party was full of laughter and the silly banter of adolescent girls.

Nicol and I were attending TASOK (the American School of Kinshasa), over four hundred miles away from the bush mission station where we had lived the four previous years with Mom and Dad and our brothers. Our parents had been forced to make the painful decision to send us away from them so that we could receive our high school education. We lived in one of three hostels. Our hostel had eleven other missionary children whose parents had also sent them to the capital city for school. Because Janet had invited some girls from the hostel just outside the gate and down the road from ours, we had decided to carpool. Our hostel parent dropped all of us off and their hostel parent would be picking us up after the party.

Our community was very small. Our worlds of youth group, school, and home life all blended together into one. Everyone knew everyone else because we did everything together. Like all small-town communities, this knowledge had both good and bad aspects to it. For the most part, everyone got along, simply because we had to see each other constantly and had no other choice.

Before we arrived at Janet's party, we had been made aware of a disturbing event that had happened earlier in the day. Cindy, the daughter of my hostel parents, had been out to the Zaire River for a day of swimming with her young adult friends. The Zaire River was a swift-moving body of water, infested with both crocodiles and hippopotami. There were rapids all along the wild course it took as it meandered through the country. Unexpectedly, a whirlpool with a powerful current came up on Cindy, threatening to sweep her away from the others in the group. Phil Braun, one of the party and a big brother-figure to so many of us teenagers, dove into the whirlpool after her with no thought of the risk to himself. He managed to push Cindy out of the raging current, but Phil was swept down the river.

We knew that the American Embassy dispatched planes and helicopters to look for Phil. In the past, others who had been swept away in the current had landed on the opposite shore of the river. I did not worry at all about the situation. After all, I reasoned, God couldn't take Phil, a young twenty-seven-year-old who loved Him so much and had come to Zaire to help his missionary parents in their work.

When Nancy, our girlfriends' hostel parent, came to pick us up from Janet's party, I just knew that Phil had been found. As she walked in the door, I asked her if the Embassy planes had found him. With tears in her eyes, she shook her head no. For the first time, I understood the gravity of the situation

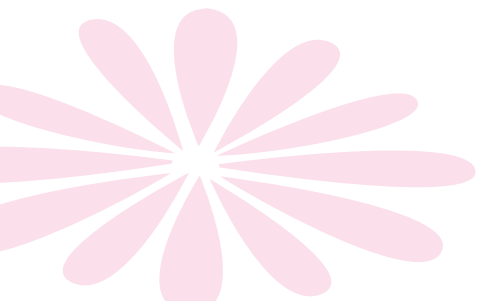
Four Core Issues of a Jealous Heart:

God, can I trust You?

God, do You love me?

God, are You good?

God, are You Just?



and burst into tears. All of us girls dissolved into heart-wrenching sobs as the realization that Phil may never be found hit us like a ton of bricks. Our big brother, our friend, was gone.

Sitting in the church sanctuary during Phil’s memorial service, with Michael W. Smith’s *Friends* playing over the sound system, I dared to think something I had never thought of before. With my mind reeling in shock, the most frightening question my sixteen-year-old mind had ever dared to ponder was suddenly shouting at me:

“God, can I trust You? How could you let this happen? How could you have taken Phil? He loved you so much, and... and... I loved him!” I thought to the sound of my own and others’ sobs. I don’t know what was more devastating to me—the fact that my beloved friend had drowned, or the thought that God may not be trustworthy.

Phil’s death turned my world upside down. I did not know how to deal with the doubt and nagging questions I had. Being a “good” Christian girl, I thought I was being disrespectful by asking them. I was afraid God might kill me for daring to think them. Denial set in, allowing my foot, once so firmly planted in the soil of belief, to slip into the pit of doubt. It would be a long time until I would see light in the darkened, hurtful, and broken places in my heart caused by my unanswered questions.

I would like us to do an exercise to help us evaluate how important trust is to us. There are no right or wrong answers. Simply mark the answer which most closely resembles your feelings right now.

If I trust someone...

I can believe he/she took my welfare into consideration even when it is not apparent in his or her actions.



I can believe he/she loves me even if we have a strong disagreement or fight.



I can believe he/she will act fairly toward me.

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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I can more easily give the person control of the situation.

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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✿ What does Psalm 22:9 tell us about when our need for trust began and with whom?

Since the day you were born, there has been a war waged against you to steal your God-given trust.

"Yet you brought me out of the _____; you made _____ in _____ even at my mother's breast."

One of the most profound revelations to me as a mother was my young children's ability to believe whatever I told them. Rob and I have tried, not flawlessly, to follow the Bible's command to raise our children in the fear of the Lord. Each of my children has come to see his or her need for Jesus Christ to be his or her Savior before the age of five. There was no debate between my children and me over theological issues. They simply trusted that Jesus was who He said He was. That ability for a child to trust is a God-given gift, according to the Word of God. Trust is precious, beautiful, and vulnerable to be altered or shattered.



Try to remember the first time your trust in someone was broken. Use three words to describe the emotions you felt:

What does Psalm 140:5 liken those crushing life experiences to?
 An empty well A deserted house A hidden snare/net A flood

Since the day you were born, there has been a war waged against you to steal your God-given trust. The reason you may not have known that before now is because the war is fought by an enemy you cannot see with your eyes (Ephesians 6:11-12). Did you notice that the verse above pointed to proud persons as who laid it down? Pride was the reason for Satan's downfall



(Isaiah 14:11-17). He wanted to ascend to God’s position and be worshiped instead of worshiping His Creator. John 10:10 depicts him as a thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. We may be able to trust in our Creator easily at birth, but Satan has deliberately laid a hidden net for us through disheartening and disappointing life circumstances with the goal of first stealing and then killing our trust. Satan stealthily uses what we cannot understand without faith to become the hidden net he uses to destroy our peace, our joy, and our very lives if we are not rescued by our Jesus.

Match the following verse with the correct reference:

“The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.” *Psalm 22:5*

“Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.” *Psalm 56:11*

“They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed.” *Nahum 1:7*

“In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” *Psalm 9:10*

Which area of trust are you having the most difficulty with right now in your relationship with God? Why?

The vacuum created by a lack of trust in our lives beckons jealousy into the empty space.

We do not have to live long to be caught in the hidden snare that Satan has carefully laid for us through unloving, unjust, or horrible circumstances that happen to us in this life. Those disappointments will cause us to look to things and people to put our hope in and be crushed by every single time. So what does jealousy in our lives have to do with our ability to trust God? Everything! The vacuum created by a lack of trust in our lives beckons jealousy into the empty space. Because so many of life’s experiences cannot be accepted without the eyes of faith, we set our sights on acquiring earthly possessions or position to ease the ache of our bewilderment over what God has allowed to happen to us. We become prey dangling in the hidden net.

Life is hard, dear friend. There are questions in this life that we will never have answered to our satisfaction on this side of eternity. Maybe you have not heard anything else this lesson, but I am praying that you will hear this today:

“Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.” *(Psalm 62:8)*

As we close, would you be willing to pour out your heart to Him over today’s lesson? Use the margin to record anything He has revealed to you about your level of trust as it may relate to jealousy in your life. May His peace flood your soul as you do.



Day Two: Have to Have It

What can you and I not buy or work for, but must have to live? We will sell our bodies and even our souls in an effort to possess it, but if we hold on too tight, we can strangle it. It must be freely given and received to be healthy. What is it?

L-O-V-E.

Scripture confirms how important our need to be loved is in Proverbs 19:22:

“What a man [or woman] desires is unfailing love; better to be poor than a liar.”

Underline the adjective in front of love in the above verse and write it here: _____

Circle true or false for the following statement as you have experienced it in your own life:

True False “I have never been disappointed by someone who says he or she loves me.”

Four Core Issues of a Jealous Heart:

God, can I trust You?

God, do You love me?

God, are You good?

God, are You Just?

We can have many people whom we feel deeply loved by in our lives. We can have loving relationships with our families and friends, but we cannot find *unfailing* love with any other human being, no matter how strong and vibrant the relationship. A loving person does not set out to hurt or disappoint us, but the disappointment will inevitably happen. None of us has experienced unfailing love, but the horrible dilemma we have as human beings is that this is the love we desire most.

What complicates our understanding of *love* even more is that we use the word so inappropriately. We *love* ice cream, summer days, and going shopping. When it comes time to describe our fervent emotions toward our spouse or children, we use *love* again. No wonder there is so much confusion about the word and its true meaning.

The Bible has a lot to say about the subject of love. Greek was one of the original languages used by men inspired by the Holy Spirit to express the different kinds of love. We are going to briefly look at three different definitions before delving into our study today.

Eros love

Eros (a greek word not found in the New Testament) love is the heart-racing, ardent, passionate love between a man and a woman. It is giddy, impulsive, and can make you do things you never thought you would. This love is carnal and fleshly. It seeks after self-pleasure rather than the welfare of others. Many of us women naturally think of this kind of love as what we desire. While we

may enjoy the rush of emotion we feel surrounding this kind of love, the downside is that we can subject ourselves to many forms of abuse because eros love can be manipulative and self-serving. If a relationship is only built on this kind of love, it runs the risk of never maturing and may eventually fizzle out.

Phileo Love

Phileo love describes the affection between two people drawn together in a relationship based on common interests. We enjoy this kind of love because this love is very rewarding. If you have a best friend, this is the kind of love you share. Unfortunately, if one person moves away or into another life stage, the common interests that drew you together initially may become no more. As a result, you may not be able to maintain the same level of closeness in your relationship as before.

Agape Love

Agape love is it, girlfriends. This is the unfailing, selfless love that every single one of our hearts longs for. This is the way that God loves us. This kind of love always considers the other person's best interests. This love remains strong and steady, no matter what the circumstance, and it never disappoints us. Sound impossible for human beings to love this way? You are right! We can not love this way unless we are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The passage of Scripture we are going to study today is probably very familiar to you. Rob and I had one of the verses from this chapter printed on our wedding ceremony program. Turn to 1 Corinthians 13 and read the passage in its entirety. For today's lesson, we will concentrate on verses 1-7.

Verses 1-3

What does the apostle Paul equate the following to if not done with love:

The words of our mouths without love are like:

The gift of prophecy, knowledge, and/or faith without love make me:

The giving away of all my possessions or a self-sacrificial death done without love gain me:

Have you ever been on the receiving end of a blast of words spoken without love?

How can you relate to the gong or cymbal illustration above? How did it make you feel to be around someone extremely intelligent or knowledgeable in the things of faith who interacted with you without love?

None of us has experienced unfailing love, but the horrible dilemma we have as human beings is that this is the love we desire most.

If we do not understand that unending love cannot be found in anything other than our relationship to Jesus Christ, we will be led astray by jealousy's lies.

Have you ever received a gift from someone you knew bought the gift merely out of obligation? Or did you grow up in a home where you were always reminded what a burden it was to clothe and feed you? How did that make you feel?

Any of those acts done above without love behind them cheapen love to us. Receiving something given by another without love not only makes us feel uncomfortable, but also unloved.


We can come to Christ for salvation and never grasp His agape love for us. Our understanding of love comes through the experience of being loved by fallible human beings. We confuse eros and phileo love for the agape love that we so deeply desire. Let's look at the definition of agape love as defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

Verses 4-7

Mentally evaluate yourself on the following characteristics of agape love. Check any area you feel you have mastered, remembering that agape love never falls short in these areas:

Love is patient.	Love is not proud.
Love is kind.	Love is not rude.
Love does not envy.	Love is not self-seeking.
Love does not boast.	Love is not proud.
Love rejoices with the truth.	Love never fails.
Love does not delight in evil.	Love always protects.
Love always trusts.	Love always hopes.
Love always perseveres.	

Not one of us would argue that these characteristics make up the love we are longing for, but not one of us has come close to perfecting these attributes of agape love. Our hearts are on a relentless pursuit to be loved this way, but no human being is capable of loving perfectly in these areas. The reason why agape love is so hard to experience, girlfriends, is that agape love loves others! Those who love with agape love put the burden of loving on themselves, not on the other person. I would like to suggest that we will never feel loved until we love others this way. We will never perfect loving others with agape love during our lives on earth, but we can strive to love this way with the Holy Spirit's help.

 We have a problem, however, if we do not trust that God is who He says He is. What does He declare Himself to be in 1 John 4:8? Write the verse out here:

God is love. A person who does not believe the depth to which she is loved by God will be jealous of love that is not love at all, the kind that continually disappoints us. How freeing to realize that we do not have to earn God's unconditional and limitless love for us. Such a realization makes us free to love others and experience a relationship with Him that we have never been able to find in anyone else.

What do the following reveal about God's love?
Match the following verses to the correct reference
(two verses will use one reference):

<i>His love endures forever.</i>	<i>1 John 4:19</i>
<i>Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.</i>	<i>1 John 4:8</i>
<i>Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.</i>	<i>1 John 4:7</i>
<i>We love because he first loved us.</i>	<i>Psalms 136:2</i>
<i>Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.</i>	

I will tell you the most damaging misinformation I believed due to my lack of trust in my relationship with God. I could not believe He loved me as Scripture clearly said He did. I pictured Him as a righteous Judge waiting to zap me when I failed, which was constantly!



My sweet sister, do you have trouble believing that God loves you? If yes, why?

We all want to be the beloved one to someone. Listen! We will never find the love we are looking for in material possessions or another human being, because love comes from God. The need to be loved is a driving force in everyone's life. No one other than God can handle the depth of our need to be loved unconditionally.

When did God first demonstrate His love for you and me according to Romans 5:8?



Jealousy calls deceptively to the heart that feels unloved. It whispers that we need to strive to be loved, no matter what the cost to our dignity or integrity. If we do not understand that true love cannot be found in anything other than our relationship with Jesus Christ, we will be led astray by jealousy's lies. Those lies will ultimately destroy us as we seek to assuage a need for love in the wrong way. Jealousy's definition of love makes everything all about its needs, in contrast to agape love making it all about the other person's needs.

“I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”

Jeremiah 17:10

Let's ask the Lord to search our hearts and examine our minds to find out if jealousy's face has shown up in our lives because we believe the lie that we are unloved. May peace be your reward.



Day Three: His Presence or His Presents? ¹

One of the reasons we may assume we have a personality conflict with someone else is because we believe we have irreconcilable differences with that person in the way we handle life's biggest priorities. Someone who continually hurts my feelings in areas that are sensitive and of high value to me will get the label of not being nice or even hurtful in my mind. Have you noticed, however, that this same person who rubs you the wrong way can get along just fine with one of your dearest friends? That is maddening and a big cause of jealousy among us women!

But what do we do when the person who we believe has disappointed us the most in the area of being good to us is God Himself? Somewhere on the journey of faith, we have had a head-on collision with God's character not fitting our understanding of the goodness of God. If we do not come to a satisfying reconciliation of the character of God and the goodness of God, we can be tempted to throw the whole idea of faith out the window.

Identify a time when you could not easily reconcile the character of God as you understood Him to be with the goodness of God:

I want to present you with two scenarios. I don't want you to respond with your head. I want you to respond with your gut-level emotions. To make this even more personal, I want you to imagine that you are the main character in both scenarios.

Scenario One

Your husband's job requires you to move to a foreign culture. Being a girl from a small town and a very close-knit family, the fact that you cannot see your family and friends except once a year is traumatic for you. You soon learn that you are pregnant, however, and your joy knows no bounds.

After several months of feeling your unborn child's kicks, you are stunned to lose the dream of motherhood before it has begun. Although you become pregnant soon after, a wound of sorrow remains raw for a long time. After the birth of two sons, a cherished daughter is born. By the time she is eight years old, her laughter and girlish ways have helped to dull the pain of the first pregnancy you lost. But one faith-shaking day, your beautiful little girl dies in her bed.

Through it all, you and your husband continue to serve where you have been called. You humbly accept God's plan for you, although that plan was not what you wanted at all. Fifteen years into your marriage, you wake up with a searing pain in your abdomen. You wrestle through horrible fears for the twins you now carry in your womb. Because you do not have access to morphine or chemotherapy for your liver cancer, you scream your way into the arms of

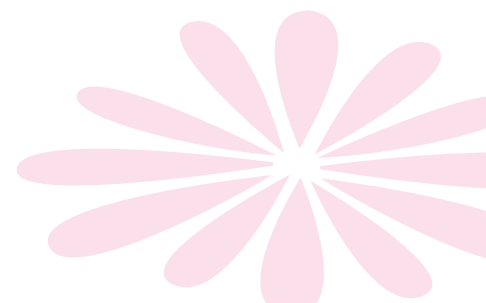
Four Core Issues of a Jealous Heart:

God, can I trust You?

God, do You love me?

God, are You good?

God, are You Just?



Somewhere on the journey of faith, we have had a head-on collision with God's character not fitting into our understanding of the goodness of God.

Jesus shortly after you give birth prematurely to your twin sons. Through the entire agonizing process of losing your earthly life, your husband can only stand by and watch your suffering as he is left to wonder why.

Scenario Two

You are a child who grew up in a loving family with many friends. Your young life was full of opportunities: a home in which you wanted for nothing materially, private elementary and secondary education in the best schools, which led to a fabulous college application allowing you to be accepted at your prestigious university.

After pledging for the most envied sorority, you met your knock-out hubby at a party. He was the catch of the campus and wanted you! You almost fainted when he called the first time. And when he proposed, you could not regain your composure for several minutes. Your summa cum laude efforts, recognized at commencement, led to the job of your dreams. Both you and your husband made a seamless transition into your lucrative careers after graduation. Your husband's ambition reassured you that the lifestyle you grew up with was going to be yours as an adult. After three years of marriage, you became pregnant the first month you tried and delivered the first of your beautiful, healthy children nine months later. You had a boy first and then a girl.

Because of your husband's success and your sizable contribution to your joint income, you were able to buy your dream house, build an impressive stock portfolio, and stay home to raise your children. Vacations to exotic places were the norm every summer. Your savings account was well-cushioned. You nor anyone else in your family has ever had a major illness. However, you live within five minutes of one of the best trauma and cancer treatment hospitals in the country.

Which woman is more blessed of God in your opinion and why?

The next question is not one I want you to answer, but simply to ponder: How much do you and I equate the goodness of God with our personal happiness and comfort?

Unfortunately, the details of scenario one are the true life facts of my dearly loved friend, Suzanne Kapinga. Her husband, Gary, married her shortly after he became a staff member of my parents' mission work in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Congo is very tribal. When Suzanne moved to Nkara-Ewa, she may as well have been moving to a foreign country, even though her home village was only two hundred miles away. Being an outsider made her the object of other's scorn. The death of her first baby left her crushed. Her beautiful daughter, Diana, died of a disease that would not have necessarily taken her life had she lived here in the United States. The last eighteen months of Suzanne's life was exacted from a body filled with excruciating

pain. Gary watched helplessly as the mother of his surviving children screamed out in anguish under the ravaging effects of liver cancer. Her illness caused the premature delivery of twin boys. Gary buried his beloved wife within weeks of burying his twin sons.

Growing up in the third world has forced me to come to the conclusion that God's goodness does not equal His presents to me. You and I live in a country that is the envy of the world. Our poorest live better than 90% of the rest of the world's population. How can God be good when more than a million people die every year from malaria? How can God be good if the average Congolese annual salary per household is one hundred dollars per year in buying power? You read that right—a year, not a day. I can easily spend well over that amount every week on groceries for my family.


Which Scripture passage is closest to your reaction when God's goodness appears hidden in your life's circumstances? Circle one.

“[Job] replied, ‘You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?’ In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.”

Job 2:10

“But Zion said, ‘The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.’”

Isaiah 49:14

 Why do you think we tend to believe that God has forgotten or abandoned us when bad things happen?

What do you tend to do emotionally when life starts getting difficult? Circle all that apply:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Become depressed | Lose sleep |
| Become controlling | Overeat |
| Withdraw emotionally | React with anger |
| Have little patience with loved ones | Pray more fervently |
| Spend more time in God's Word | Over-spend |
| Turn to addictive behaviors | |

It has only been in the last three years that I have understood that I truly do have a choice to not react in a destructive way emotionally when my circumstances have become difficult. Hear me loud and clear: I do not always make the right choice! My first response is to react with anger and worry about what is happening around me. But God has patiently been teaching me that adversity and suffering are to be rejoiced over, not feared.



What are the benefits of trials according to the following verses:

Isaiah 30:20 _____

James 1:2-3 _____

I Peter 1:6-7 _____

Do we call ourselves blessed by God when we are experiencing His presence or His presents? Looking at the two scenarios I provided in this lesson, if our definition of God's blessing is favorable circumstances, one could argue that my friend Suzanne saw none of God's goodness in her short and pain-filled life. If that were true, then God could not have been good to Suzanne, her husband, or her surviving children.

How then do I explain the peace and joy that Suzanne continued to possess which defied her horrible circumstances? Perhaps the explanation is found in realizing that God's goodness is not limited to just the material blessings He lavishes on us. Instead, the true blessing of God is found in His presence. Many times, we will only search for a deeper relationship with Him because of the trials in our lives.

I came across a sermon by Charles Spurgeon, a British preacher from the nineteenth century. His perspective on trials has profoundly affected the way I look at my own circumstances:

“When the Lord finds a saint whom He loves—loves much—He may spare other men trials and troubles, but He certainly will not this well-beloved one. The more beloved you are the more of the rod you shall have... It is an awful thing to be a favorite of heaven. It is a thing to be sought after and to be rejoiced in, but remember, to be one of the King's council-chamber is a thing involving such work for faith that flesh and blood might shrink from the painful blessing... Sometimes when we plead for our adverse circumstances to change, God simply makes us content where we are. Many saints have found riches in poverty, ease in labor, rest in pain, and delight in affliction. Our Lord can so adapt our minds our circumstances, that the bitter is sweet, and the burden is light.”²

Without the right perspective on the difficulties God has ordained in our lives, we can easily begin to envy the gifts God has given to someone else. With the wrong definition of God's blessing, we spend our lives in vain striving to attain material possessions that can be here today and gone tomorrow. We can lose precious family and friends in our frantic pursuit of what cannot satisfy and will only whet our desire for something bigger and better. Eventually we will come to the disappointing conclusion that our pursuit for soul satisfaction cannot be found in anyone or anything on this earth. His presence is where His goodness is found. The joy of the trial is experienced when we realize that without the pain, we would not know that His presence is what we desire more than His presents.

Do we call ourselves
blessed by God when
we are experiencing
His presence or
His presents?

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Psalm 16:11

As we close today's lesson, have you allowed jealousy to cause you to desire God's presents more than His presence in your life? Use the space below to pour your heart out to Him about this:



Day Four: God, Are You Just?

Hey girlfriends! I am so excited about our lesson today and tomorrow.

Without looking back at your homework, list the three core issues of a jealous heart that we have discussed so far:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

I have found that in the narrative of a Biblical character I can more readily recognize valuable life lessons which help to illuminate my blindness regarding my own flaws. The Word of God provides story after story in the Old Testament of individuals who did life their own way or walked in obedience with Him. I get completely pulled into the story when the Bible provides multiple lessons in the life of one person—especially when that person is a woman.

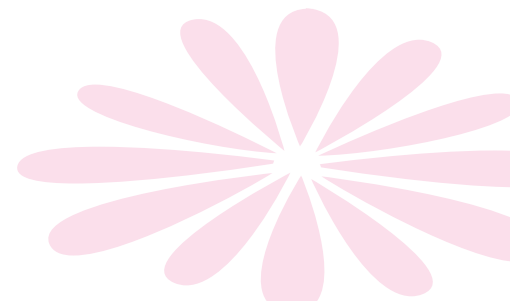
Song of Solomon 8:6 is a passage of Scripture that will give us insight into the intensity of the situation in which the woman we will study today and tomorrow found herself. Hannah is a popular name to give a baby girl in the United States. The Biblical character Hannah is held up in Sunday school stories as the woman who did an unbelievable act in fulfilling her end of a request she made to God when He fulfilled His part to her. In a study that has yet to hold out an example in female form of handling jealousy correctly, it is my prayer that we will see Hannah as the worthy example to follow. If you are familiar with Hannah's story in Scripture, I am going to ask you to pray for new eyes as we look at her situation in the context of our study's subject of jealousy.


There is no subject that has been written or sung about more, in all languages of the world in all its many cultures, than the power of romantic love. Solomon was inspired by God to write an entire book about both the ecstasy and despondency that can be experienced originating from the love relationship between a man and a woman.

Please read Song of Solomon 8:6 and contemplate the following questions in light of our study:

What does this verse compare the strength of love to?

Our brokenness of spirit does not make Christ run away from us, but the first step of our healing comes in running to Him.



 What attribute following *love* is compared in its cruelty to the grave in this verse?

Do you agree that love is as strong as death and that its jealousy is as unyielding as the grave? If yes, please give a personal life example that illustrates this truth. You will not be called on to share this with anyone.

With your own experience fresh in your mind, let's read Hannah's story found in 1 Samuel 1:1-8. I can hardly imagine the household in which Hannah lived. I have often joked with my husband that he can only handle being married to one woman—that would be *me*. Would you agree that a one man, two women love triangle equals one volatile opportunity for jealousy to be involved? Domestic violence calls are those that have the most potential to be deadly because of the rage involved when a man and a woman cannot handle their disagreement in a constructive manner. Not only are those calls a danger to those involved in the relationship, but also to law enforcement who have been called on to intervene in the situation.

Hannah's problem was that she and her husband's other matrimonial partner had to share one man. How many of us have ever played second fiddle to another woman in a dating relationship? To feel like a fool in any area is painful, but when it involves love with all its complex emotions, coherent, rational decisions can be nonexistent. To have to share a husband is unthinkable. There were several complicating factors involved in Hannah's having to share a house with the other wife, Peninnah. Let's examine those together.

Please read 1 Samuel 1:4-8 again. In the first column, list the possible reasons for Peninnah's jealousy toward Hannah. In the second column, list the possible reasons for Hannah's jealousy toward Peninnah.

Peninnah toward Hannah

Hannah toward Peninnah

Jealousy is a symptom of a deeper heart issue. Looking at the three core issues we listed at the beginning of the lesson, which issue do you think was Peninnah's biggest area of brokenness and why?

To feel like a fool in any area is painful, but when it involves love with all its complex emotions, coherent, rational decisions can be nonexistent.

Verse six gives us a clue as to why Peninnah provoked and irritated Hannah, but I believe that Peninnah's behavior came from a deeper problem revealed in verse five concerning the man they shared. What was that?

List the four things the earth trembles and cannot bear up under in Proverbs 30:21-23:

People react differently to hurt. Some, like Peninnah, lash out and openly wound another. Hannah appeared to be more passive in her response to Peninnah's aggression toward her. I would like to share my own perspective on why she might have chosen to struggle through her hurt alone. My husband is the only person who truly sees all sides of me. It is unthinkable to me to lash out at a person to his or her face, not because I have a corner on righteousness, but because I feel that I would bring disgrace to myself. My pride and the fear of making a spectacle of myself restrain me in a confrontation with those outside of my marriage. I, like Hannah, might weep when confronted aggressively by someone, or I may even be able to keep it together until I feel I am safe to emote, but I do not tend to lash out. The hurt and rage I have, however, is just as real to me; I just do not show it outwardly.

I especially will not share my hurt if I feel hopeless to change the situation. Now let me apply this to Hannah's story. I hope that you included Hannah's infertility in the possible reasons for Hannah's jealousy toward Peninnah. For those of you who have never had fertility problems, it may be hard to imagine what that hurt does to a woman.

I will never forget the joy I had looking down at positive result in the window of the pregnancy test I took in February of 1996. I worked at a health department, which gave pregnancy tests to clients. I was alone in the bathroom when I took the test. My husband, Rob, and I had been married for three and a half years. I had wanted to try for a baby within the first year of marriage. Rob, the more practical of the two of us, thought it was important that we be able to provide for the baby. That meant we needed to eliminate both his student loans and mine, before we added a third member to our family. Two and a half years later, the loans were paid off, we had bought our first home, and he had come around to the idea of starting our family.

Four days after taking the pregnancy test, I woke up to the worst cramping and bleeding I had ever experienced. The temperature outside had drastically changed overnight. When the calendar says February in the Midwest, the thermometer outside rarely shows anything above the freezing point. A sudden heat wave with temperatures in the fifties had come through our suburb of Chicago while I slept. The result was fog so thick I could not see the street from the end of my short driveway.

Although I knew in my head that the amount of bleeding I was experiencing gave me little hope of keeping the baby, I called my doctor's office for an appointment. I felt as though I was on an alien planet as I tried to carefully drive through the fog. I had been crying ever since I had woken up and looked a mess by the time I arrived at the doctor's office. The doctor's bedside manner was horrible. "Mrs. Lantz, you have to stop thinking of this [embryo] as a baby. You were barely pregnant. It is just a ball of cells at this stage. There will be another opportunity for you to have another one." *Barely pregnant*—what did that mean? How could I be barely pregnant? Just a ball of cells—is that what this disconnected man had just said to try to ease my grief? *No!* My heart screamed.



Can you relate to the author's anguish in Psalm 88:6?
How has struggling with a feeling of injustice put you there as you have become jealousy's victim or its perpetrator?
Please share here:

The psalmist's words resonated with me at that time because the aftermath of my miscarriage caused me to fall into a pit of despair. The lowest and darkest depths of the pit were sounded in my soul at the frightening prospect that I might never be able to have a baby. This was a new fear. I had always assumed that my body would be able to carry a baby to full-term. Now I had to face the possibility that I may never get to carry a child in my womb, which was something I had wanted since my childhood.

Jealousy was something I felt profoundly after my miscarriage. Every time I would see a woman with a baby, I would resent the fact that she could be a mother. I realize now that my jealousy was so bewildering because I did not see then that my self-esteem had taken such a hit. I felt crippled, broken, inept, and helpless because I could not fix myself. There was no quick fix to my situation. I could do nothing to change my circumstances. Is it possible that Hannah felt the same way as I did?

What was Elkanah's response to Hannah's weeping in Samuel 1:8?

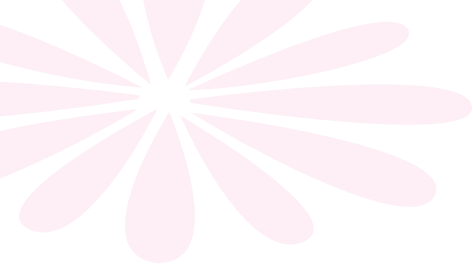
Four Core Issues of a Jealous Heart:

God, can I trust You?

God, do You love me?

God, are You good?

God, are You Just?



Hannah and Peninnah each wanted what the other wife had and felt helpless to have their unmet desires fulfilled. Both Hannah and Peninnah were victims of the cruelty of jealousy in different ways. Peninnah wanted Elkanah's love, but his love belonged to Hannah. Peninnah must have felt frustrated with her inability to win Elkanah's full devotion because she had given him children in a culture that judged a woman's value on the functionality of her womb. In other words, Peninnah had given him what her culture told her she must, and, yet, she did not receive the devotion she craved. Elkanah loved Hannah more. In contrast, Hannah had to face her possible feelings of unworthiness as a woman by herself because of Elkanah's inability to empathize with the pain of her infertility.

Do you think that feelings of jealousy in your life might originate from a feeling of brokenness in the area of believing that God is not just in the way He has ordained your circumstances? Thinking of today's lesson, can you see yourself in either Peninnah's or Hannah's position? Please use the space below to discuss that with the Lord.

So where do we go from here? We tell the Lord where we are struggling. If we are in the pit, we tell Him. He will hear our cry for mercy and turn His ear to us individually. He has found us worthy. Our brokenness of spirit does not make Christ run away from us, but the first step of our healing comes in running to Him. Hope is just around the corner, my beloved sister! Tomorrow we will examine the steps Hannah took on the road to wholeness. You and I can choose to walk the same path she chose in our own lives. I pray that we will.



Day Five: Making the Choice to Leave the Pit

I hate the pit that jealousy has forced me to live in. So how do I get out of it? We are going to continue with Hannah’s story to see how she wrestled with jealousy and found a way out of her misery. Before we go any farther, we need to establish what we believe about the relevancy of Scripture in our lives. On a scale of one to ten, rate how relevant you feel God’s Word is to your daily life. As part of your rating, please factor in how often you consult His Word for direction in life’s struggles.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not relevant at all				Relevant in some areas of life			Relevant in all areas of my life		

Our failure or success in wrestling with jealousy will depend on whether we believe that what God says about His character is true or what our feelings tell us is true about Him. What does Scripture say about God in the following four core issues we have studied this week?

His **trustworthiness** in Psalm 143:8?

His **love** for us in Jeremiah 31:3?

His **goodness** in Psalm 22:5?

His **justice** in Deuteronomy 32:4?

Glancing back at I Samuel 1:1-8, how could Hannah's jealousy toward Penninah be the result of a lack of belief in God's sovereignty in her life in the following areas?

Hannah's trust in God:

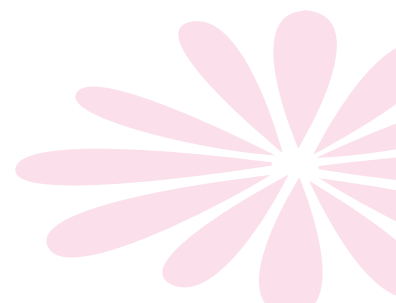
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God, are You good?

God, are You Just?



Hannah's perception of God's love for her:

Hannah's perception of God's goodness to her:

Hannah's perception of God's justice toward her:

Let's pick up today's story in I Samuel 1:9-20 and carefully read through the passage. Please make a note of important observations to you on the margin of this page.

I love to read. Nothing is worse to me, however, than becoming completely wrapped up in a story that ends badly. Thankfully, Hannah's story does not end that way. At first glance, we may glibly sigh with relief for Hannah as she names her firstborn son, this baby that she longed for so greatly. Before we say, "And mother and son lived happily ever after," we must examine the difficult work Hannah chose to allow God to do in her life before she held her baby boy in her arms.

I Samuel 1:9 says, "Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh..."

Glance back at verse three of I Samuel 1. In what location did the ugliness of the rivalry between Hannah and Peninnah emerge?

In front of Elkanah At Shiloh
Between Peninnah's children and Hannah

Strong's Concordance defines *Shiloh* as, "***a place of rest.***" ³

In fact, the Hebrew word from which *Shiloh* is derived expands the definition this way:

"he whose it is, that which belongs to him, tranquility." ⁴

Can you think of a place in your own mind that always reminds you of a specific, traumatic experience no matter how time has past since you were last there? Some examples of this place may be a hospital corridor where you received devastating news, the location where a person you loved ended a relationship you wanted to continue, a courtroom where you said goodbye to your dream of living happily ever after with the one who is now your ex-spouse, or a funeral home where your mind reeled with the finality of death and all that its stinging consequences would mean to your future. You may

have consciously or unconsciously made a mental note to never return to that particular place because of the anguish the associated memories resurrect in your mind.



In the context of Hannah's possible association with her difficulty in Shiloh, where do you find unrest in a place where you should find peace (your own Shiloh)?

Every Israelite male was required by Levitical law to appear before the Lord during three annual festivals of praise and sacrifice (see Deuteronomy 16:16-17). The three mandatory festivals were the Feast of Unleavened Bread (the Passover), the Festival of Weeks, and the Festival of Tabernacles. *The NIV Study Bible* notes on our passage explains that Elkanah, Peninnah and her 5 children, and Hannah were most likely attending the Festival of Weeks, a seven day celebration.⁵

Please summarize the purpose of the celebration by reading Deuteronomy 16:14-15. Note especially the attitude that the participants were to bring to the celebration.

You and I may have the luxury of never having to return physically to those places that pull the scab off the wound of dreadful memories in our past, but Hannah had to face Shiloh in order to obey God's will for her life as an Israelite.

Look back again at I Samuel 1:3, 7. How often did Hannah have to revisit Shiloh and face Peninnah's provocation?


I hope that the irony was not lost on us that this particular festival was to be celebrated joyfully by all family members for seven days for the purpose of giving God thanks for His blessing on a year's bountiful harvest. Have you ever been forced to spend any period of time (perhaps Christmas) with a family member who made you feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or angry... anything but joyful? Perhaps you can relate well to Hannah's having to return to this place every year because you, too, have been forced to revisit an unpleasant situation through no choice of your own.

After reading I Samuel 1:9-16, I believe we can assume that the state of Hannah's heart was anything but tranquil. After finishing yet another meal that she did not really taste, Hannah stood up. She had known the cruelty

Our failure or success in wrestling with jealousy will depend on whether or not we believe that what God says about His character is true or what our feelings tell us is true about Him.

and bitterness of her rival wife Peninnah's jealousy and the seeming unfairness of bringing a barren womb to a celebration of God's goodness to families year after year. After finally coming to the end of herself, this desperate woman realized there was hope being offered which would allow her to find relief from the constant pain of her infertility.

Hannah's character makes me think that she believed in the God of Israel, but the fact that Hannah's wounds were made over many years makes me wonder if maybe, until that point, she had never thought to ask Him to show Himself powerful in her pain. I can relate to Hannah. I have known Jesus as my Savior since age five, but I can fail to believe that He is powerful enough to make a true difference in the area in which I need to trust Him. In those broken places of my heart, I have chosen jealousy to reign. I have limited His ability to heal me because of my unbelief. Eleven years ago, I started standing up against the unbelief that God could not be trusted in the broken places that had brought me pain to revisit in my mind. Gradually, my head knowledge of His power started to become heart knowledge as my daily time with the Lord in His Word began to heal me.

 To whom did Hannah turn to for help (1 Samuel 1:12-13)?

Did you see that Eli the priest misjudged her? Instead of drinking from a cup of sorrow, what kind of cup did Eli think she had been drinking from (verse 15)?

How about you? Have you either misjudged someone or been misjudged by someone when you were in deep sorrow? How did you feel as the perpetrator and/or the victim of that judgment?

I have felt as foolish in my own misplaced judgments of others as Eli must have felt after he realized he had made such a mistake about Hannah. A wise woman, Hannah did not rebuke him in anger, but responded in humility. In response to her sharing her heart with him, Eli blessed her in the place of his former rebuke.

I believe Eli's response to Hannah is God's promise to us who choose to respond according to Proverbs 15:1a. Please write that verse below.

Let's now look at the final three verses of our story. After Hannah had received Eli's blessing, where did she go and what did she do?

Her appetite had come back! What can we account for the dramatic change in the Hannah of verse 18? I would like to suggest that the following passage contains the answer:

“The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!”
Psalm 116:3-4 (New King James Version)

Strong's Concordance defines Sheol this way: sheol, underworld, grave, hell, pit. ⁶

The grave is devoid of any joy. Have you ever felt, like the writer of Psalm 116, that your soul has been left in the grave? I want us to look carefully at verse 4, because this was the remedy for Hannah's feeling as though she was in the grave. Where do we need to go to get out of the pit—the hell—we find ourselves in? Where is fullness of joy found?

Hannah's entering into His presence unleashed God's power to rescue her soul from the depths of despair. Do you remember that jealousy's cruelty was compared to the grave, the place of the dead (Song of Solomon 8:6) in yesterday's lesson? How does our soul leave the pit, the grave of jealousy behind? We practice His presence.

You may say, “Shawn, how do I do that? I don't know what that means.” We are human beings, who will continue to struggle with jealousy until the day we leave this world for heaven, but we are not without a powerful defense.

Please write out our defense against jealousy found in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 below:

We practice our fullness of joy in His presence by deliberately taking each jealous thought and, like Hannah, pouring out our bitterness of soul to the One who can rescue us from death (Hebrews 5:7). No psychologist or behavioral modification can save us. The way out of the pit is by taking Him at His word, and doing what it says. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 may look like this to me:

In those broken places of my heart, I have chosen jealousy to reign. I have limited His ability to heal me because of my unbelief.



“Lord, the weapons that You have given me by Your Spirit are not weapons of the world that are useless. I believe that they have divine power to demolish this stronghold of jealousy in my life. Because of the authority Your shed blood has given me, I demolish this jealous way of thinking because dwelling on it sets itself up against what I know You would want for me. I now take this thought captive and make it obedient to You, Jesus. I will find what I desire most in Your presence. Give me fullness of joy in Your presence! Help me!”

Did Hannah ever feel the sting of Peninnah’s words again? I can almost guarantee that she did, knowing that two women still lived under the roof of one man. Notice in 1 Samuel 1:20 that, “in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son.” Did Hannah ever feel the pit closing around her soul again? I am sure of it. But she learned, like you and I can, to leave our Sheol behind so that our Shiloh can be resurrected in a place that no longer makes us ache in its remembrance. Our Shiloh can become our place of rest.

I am asking the Lord to help us begin to see that jealousy is a symptom of a broken heart in one of the four core issues we studied this week. Although jealousy pulled Hannah into the pit of despair, she walked out of the pit with God’s help. We can, too.

Straight Down A Twisted Path

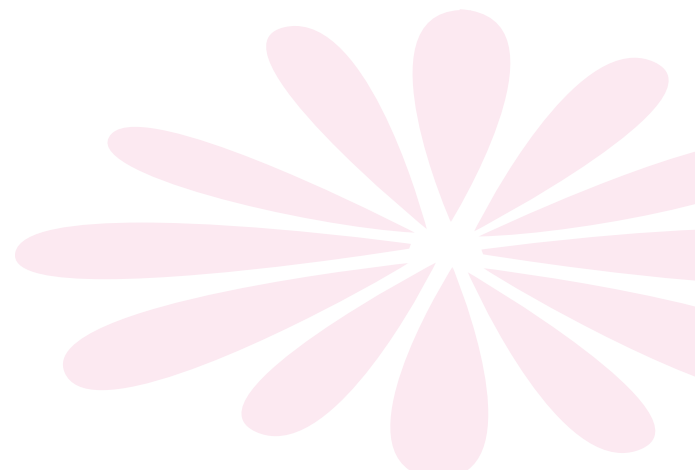
Have you ever acted rebelliously toward your parents? That is a rhetorical question, of course! We all have. But have you ever been shocked when your parents granted their permission against their better judgment?

Peer pressure acts strangely on the best of us, pushing us to act or do what we have never done before. Sometimes, after warning us of the consequences of our actions, our parents have let us feel the sting of a decision we made out of the wrong motives. Unfortunately, we are not the only ones hurt for our rebellion.

We are going to see Israel ask for a king because they wanted to be like the other nations around them, without counting the cost of that decision. Although the events of this week's study happened thousands of years ago, we are going to see ourselves in the story line—painfully so, at times. As much as things change, some things stay the same. Let's meet Hannah's little boy, Samuel, now an old man. We may think that choosing obedience, like Hannah did, is only for the one who obeys. Listen to the precious promise God gives us:

But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children—with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. Psalm 103:17-18

Thankfully, God's lavish grace also extends blessing far beyond the life of one individual. Hannah's choice to walk out of the pit of jealousy blessed not only her own life, but also the life of the beloved son she relinquished to God for His service. May we never see Samuel in quite the same way again after this week's study.



WEEK TWO



Day One: The Beginnings of Trouble

I am fascinated with the history of others. I love nothing better than to sit on the couch at a new acquaintance's home and look through her photo albums. While some might think this is a boring activity, I love seeing an inside track of people's lives this way. I think the reason that I love to see snapshots of someone's past is because they give clues to help me understand the person I am encountering in the present. Looking through the old photo albums may give me insight into the following questions I have about my new friend:

Does she look totally different now than she did in high school? Did she act differently then? How old was she when she got married or had her first child? Why does she look sad in this picture?

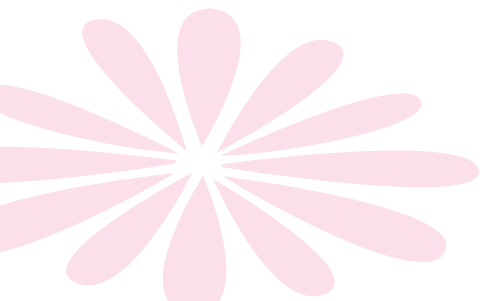
We are going to spend the majority of our time in this study on the life of a man named Saul. The Bible does not tell us every thought or deed of Saul, but the book of I Samuel gives us snapshots of crucial periods and decisions made in his life—ones in which the Word of God gives enough detail for us to understand life-altering truths offered to us on the page.

My youngest daughter and I have spent months compiling her baby book. Jenna was my third child in three and a half years. Although I did a fair job writing down details about my first two children, I regret to admit that I did not even buy a baby book for Jenna. One day last year, Jenna's older siblings decided to pull out their baby books. After an anxiety-filled search in the built-in shelves in our living room, Jenna came to me with tears in her eyes wondering if her book had somehow gotten lost.

I gulped hard and sheepishly admitted that the reason she could not find the book was not because it had gotten lost, but was because it didn't exist. That was not one of my prouder moments of motherhood, let me assure you! She brought me the computer and asked me to remedy the situation right away. She picked out the baby book that caught her eye and I ordered it right then. The book came within the week. The process of putting together pictures and captions from her life has afforded some of the most precious times we have shared together as mother and daughter.

The first pages of Jenna's baby book are filled with pictures of her father and me, and her siblings—the key people that were here before the day of her birth. In the same way, our in-depth study of the life of Saul does not start with the first time he is introduced in the Biblical narrative, but with the individual that he replaced. We met and cheered on Hannah, this man's mother, through her victory over jealousy's pit last week. Saul will quickly become the central focus of our study before the end of this week, but we need to start by looking at life in Israel through the eyes of a judge named Samuel.

I have heard the painful crash in my ears as I realize that what has tumbled out of my mouth lies shattered in front of me with no way to pick up the broken shards.



To get an idea of who Samuel was, please read the following verses and write a short sentence about the information you find out about him:

I Samuel 1: 21-22:

I Samuel 1:27-28:

I Samuel 2:11:

I Samuel 3:19-21, 4:1:

I Samuel 7:15

Samuel had faithfully served the Lord as both a prophet and a judge in Israel from early on in his young life under the high priest of Israel, Eli. We are about to meet him as an elderly man in 1 Samuel 8. I know that I do not share with Samuel the incredible feat of none of his words falling to the ground (I Samuel 3:19). On the contrary, I have heard the painful crash in my ears as I realize that what has tumbled out of my mouth lies shattered in front of me with no way to pick up the broken shards.

Let's read all of 1 Samuel 8 now, paying special attention to the following insights:

Whom had Samuel appointed as his helpers to judge Israel according to verse 1?

Contrast verse 3 with I Samuel 3:19 above. What does verse three tell us about Samuel's sons?

Unfortunately, just because your father serves God, there is no guarantee that you will continue in his footsteps. There are a staggering number of young people leaving the church and never returning.

Can you relate to Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah?
Have you ever left the faith of your parent(s) for a time?

Drawing from your own experience or someone you know, circle the factors which may have influenced yours or someone else's decision to leave the faith of his or her childhood:

Culture/friends' influence	Hypocrisy of church members
Faith never really took root	Church did not seem important

Other _____

Samuel was appointed by God to minister to Israel. Now he was old and broken down—long past the years of vigor and vitality. Those who had known him during his prime were replaced by a new generation led by two main constants in their lives. Idolatry and complacency had left them without the wisdom to fathom the danger of asking for an earthly king.

What were the qualifications of the new king that they required in 1 Samuel 8:5?

If you couldn't find one, you would be right. The main motivation for wanting a king was to be like all the other nations around them.

How did Samuel receive this new request of the elders (verse 6)?

What did God clarify to Samuel that indicates to us what emotion Samuel was feeling because of the peoples' rejection (verse 7)?

Girlfriends, it is crucial that we learn something from God's answer to Samuel's hurt. Horrible situations happen in our lives that we do not deserve. In our humanness, we can become so wrapped up in the rejection of others that we start believing we are being punished by God through their actions toward us. Let me be quick to say that we must examine our hearts before God frequently to make sure that there is no offensive way in us (Psalm 139:23-24).

I can almost hear the Lord saying "Samuel, don't grieve for yourself. Grieve for Me, because I am the One they have rejected, not you!"

✿ If, however, the Spirit of God does not reveal that the problem lies with us, what may we be encouraged by in I Peter 4:13-14 as a possible cause for others' rejection?

God shone a light in Samuel's mind on the true reason why Israel had rejected him when he had done no wrong to anyone. I can almost hear the Lord saying, "Samuel, don't grieve for yourself. Grieve for Me, because *I am the One they have rejected, not you!*"

Is this a comfort to you in a difficult life situation you may be facing or have faced in the past involving rejection by others? Share here.

Have you ever wanted something simply because of its appearance and not necessarily because it was the right choice for you? Expound in the following areas:

Dating and/or marriage partner:

Something you couldn't afford:

Material possessions:

The prominent eighteenth century theologian, Matthew Henry, pointed out that God had a king for Israel that was after His own heart, if Israel would have been willing to wait for the king God would have given them ¹. They were not willing to wait.

What were some of the warnings Samuel gave to them about a king in verses 11-18? Underline the warnings that would have made you reconsider wanting an earthly king:

Still, Israel wouldn't be satisfied. An old man with a broken heart was now given the unenviable task of finding his own replacement. Maybe that has happened to you, too. Maybe in a friendship, maybe in a position at work. To be able to handle rejection with grace is amazing.

Discontentment is
a breeding ground
for all things evil.



Note here where you and I might see the first signs of jealousy raising its ugly head even in this stage of the story.

My dear sisters, we cannot separate ourselves from Scripture. God promises that His Word will not go out and return void. There is a lesson for each one of us today.

Who do you most closely identify with today in your life experience—Samuel the rejected or the elders itching for something new without having really counted the cost? Please share why here:

The atmosphere in Israel was ripe for the ugly green monster of jealousy to raise its head: dissatisfaction with God's will, a God-appointed leader rejected, and a flippant people whose eyes were focused on what someone else had (pagan nations, in this case). Discontentment is a breeding ground for all things evil. Israel made a critical choice to rebel against God being her King. In the weeks to come, we are going to see what a huge mistake that decision would be.



Day Two: A Dire Warning Unheeded

We are going to spend one more day with Samuel today before he steps down from his position. Samuel is going to go peaceably, but not without a thorough chastisement of the people for their rejection of God as their King. This could not have been an easy thing for Samuel to do. Who wants to leave their position, even if they have been forced out of it unfairly, possibly leaving a bad taste in the mouths of those being left behind? I love elderly people. One thing they are not afraid of is warning those around them of the impending consequences of certain actions.

How does the Bible describe godly, elderly people? Match the following (paraphrased) Scriptures with their correct references:

We are to rise in respect of the elderly.

Leviticus 19:32

God Himself is the One who sustains the elderly

Psalms 92:14-15

We are not to speak disrespectfully to the elderly.

Isaiah 46:4

The elderly continue to bear fruit in their old age.

I Timothy 5:1

I lived in the country of Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, during my childhood and adolescent years. Anyone with gray hair was highly respected. Gray hair meant that the individual had survived the overwhelming odds of living past the age of forty-seven—the life expectancy of the country. There was an unspoken, but very real, code of conduct among the Congolese with those who were elderly. The grandparents were treated as royalty. An elderly man or woman's advice was to be listened to and thoughtfully considered. I never saw a hint of disrespect among family members with the aged—not unless those that were younger wanted to receive a severe tongue lashing. We Americans have a lot to learn from the Congolese family dynamic.

Do you think our culture treats the elderly as Scripture has instructed us to? Why or why not?

For our study today, we need to go back to 1 Samuel 8. Let's back up a little to include yesterday's portion of Scripture for context as we read 1 Samuel 8:6-22.

An elderly man or woman's advice was to be listened to and thoughtfully considered.

What did the Lord want Samuel to do before He gave them an earthly king according to verse nine? Underline the correct answer.

punish them

plead with them

warn them

hide information from them

I want us to hear how strongly this verse reads in the original Hebrew. Sometimes the seriousness of the tone in which something is said gets lost when translated from one language to another. Here are some other instances where the same derivative of the word *warn* is used:

“I will summon as my reliable witnesses...”

Isaiah 8:2

“For I solemnly warned your ancestors to obey me. I warned them again and again, ever since I delivered them out of Egypt until this very day.”

Jeremiah 11:7

“Today I invoke heaven and earth as a witness against you that I have set life and death, blessing and curse, before you. Therefore choose life so that you and your descendants may live!”

Deuteronomy 30:19

As much as we might deny the truth, God always gives us warnings before we sin. Always.

The Lord was going to give Israel a king, but not before the people heard what their decision would bring down on their heads. The Lord was going to call this day of rejection of Him as a witness against Israel. As much as we might deny the truth, God always gives us warnings before we sin. Always. Israel would have their way, but not without fully knowing and accepting the consequences for their actions.



What verse in this passage we just read indicates that the people were fully aware of these consequences? Write it out here:

Briefly skim 1 Samuel 8:11-18 again. Imagine that you were one in the crowd that day. What three warnings would been awful enough to have considered changing your mind about replacing God with an earthly king?

1)

2)

3)



Why do you think the people of Israel were so stubborn?

It is so easy to look at the Israelites and point a judgmental finger at them. If you are familiar with the story of the kings of Israel, you will remember that this day's decision was the origin of unbelievable destruction. What the people could not see that day was how grieved God's heart would be over their love affair with pagan nations. Their rejection of Him that day would ultimately lead to one horrible king after another, with a few godly ones in between. Israel would ultimately split over a civil war and cease to be a united kingdom. And tragically, the nation's two kingdoms would be exiled for their sin.



Name a time when you deliberately disobeyed God's commands for your life. How would you characterize your emotional health after making that decision? (e.g. peaceful, stressful, etc...)

What is the lesson here for us? I want us to think about a time when we deliberately disobeyed God, having been warned that there would be a price to pay for our rebellion. The stiff-necked betrayal of God's people is what continues to plague followers of Christ today. We do not have a king or a judge over us now, but we still have God-given authority through the Scriptures. As believers in Christ, we are to be in submission to our pastors and his staff as well as lay people of our congregations.

My dear sister, are you still in the pit? God's will often looks unappealing compared to our own selfish desires. A life of obedience to God's commands can seem to be a life of restrictions with little fun. Nothing could be further from the truth. The pathway of obedience leads to joy, peace, and sweet sleep at night. Still, if we insist on our own way, God will relent. He will give us what we think we want. And then, after we realize the miry pit we have placed ourselves in, He will rescue when we repent and turn away from that behavior.

If the Holy Spirit is prompting you to face something you need to repent of, please use the space below to write out your confession. This will be for no one's eyes except yours and the eyes of your God who loves you so much.

So, the stage was set for the dawn of a new type of ruler. God had been rejected as Israel's king, their leader Samuel has been profoundly hurt, and Israel was flippant about the burden about to be thrust on their shoulders because of their rebellion.

The pathway of obedience leads to joy, peace and sweet sleep at night.



Day Three: The Donkey Wrangler

“And these beginnings [of Saul] would have been very hopeful and promising if it had not been that the sin of the people was the spring [board] of this great affair.”²

– Matthew Henry

Israel had deposed her righteous leader, Samuel, and waited for the announcement of her first king. Let’s refresh our memories.

What were the three reasons Israel rejected Samuel as her leader (see I Samuel 8:5)?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

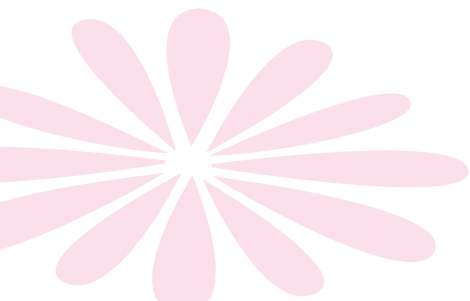
Some distance away from the commotion of Samuel and the people, two men set out on a mission, neither one realizing how life-changing the trip would be for one of them. Samuel has been the main character of our study this week thus far. From this point on, the rejected judge will fade into the background of the story only to be seen briefly.

I was a voracious reader at age ten when my family became missionaries to Congo. We did not have a library nearby to provide a variety in books so I read the same ones repeatedly. Hands down, my favorite books were biographical in nature. If the story was true and exciting, that made it all the more enjoyable. Scripture is a treasure in providing us with an inside look at the workings of an extraordinary God moving in the lives of ordinary people. Our first introduction to these people can be less than memorable if we did not realize that the Author lived and breathed in the written words.

Let’s read I Samuel 9:1-20 and be introduced to the main protagonist of our study. How does I Samuel 9:1-2 describe Kish and his son Saul?

The community that I lived in during my high school years was very small. The number of students from seventh to twelfth grade barely numbered two hundred altogether. Although we were on the African continent, the characteristics of an American small town were very evident. Perhaps some of us grew up in a thriving metropolis or urban setting. It doesn’t matter. Every small community (youth group, sports team, choir, Sunday school class) has its “star.” This is the person that is looked to as being “head and shoulders above the rest.”

Scripture is a treasure in providing us with an inside look at the workings of an extraordinary God moving in the lives of ordinary people.



Let's have some fun. I know exactly who was "head and shoulders" above the rest of the crowd in my high school and all those smaller groups.

Give the first name of the person who was considered above the rest of the crowd and why he or she was given that honor (athletic, intelligent, charismatic, physical attractiveness, etc.):

No matter how close or far away in time or distance we are from those days, we can instantly think of the person who was our school's hero or heroine. I can bet that the reasons that the person was given that position in our eyes was, almost without exception, due to some quality that human beings esteem, not necessarily because he or she possessed the qualities God esteems.

 What is the danger of exalting someone based on his/her outward appearance and/or charisma?

What was the reason for the long trip taken by Saul and his father's servant according to I Samuel 9:3-4?

When they couldn't find what they were looking for, what did the servant suggest to Saul that they do (verse 6)?

What was Saul's response to his servant's suggestion in verse 7?

Have you ever known anyone who looked to money as the solution for everything? It is so interesting to me that Saul's servant knew that the man of God, Samuel, lived nearby. Yet Saul was unwilling to seek out Samuel's wisdom because he did not have any money in his pockets. It would seem apparent that Saul was unfamiliar with the person of Samuel by his response to the servant's suggestion. Only after learning that the servant had some silver in his possession was Saul ready to find this man of God.

If Samuel had not decided that obedience to the true King of Israel was more important than his pride, Saul could have found himself at the receiving end of a curse rather than the blessing he was about to hear.

Our God does not need anything we give Him. He is the owner of everything. Share an experience when money really helped you out of the difficulty of an unforeseen circumstance and when it did not.

What did the young women inform Saul and his servant about Samuel's presence in their town according to I Samuel 9:12-14? Circle all that Samuel was going to do there:
 Offer a sacrifice. Eat a special meal with invited guests.
 Receive his wages.

Looking at I Samuel 9:15-17, how did Samuel know who Saul was as he came toward Samuel?

Last week in our lesson on Hannah, we discovered that every Israelite male was required by Levitical law to appear before the Lord during three annual festivals of praise and sacrifice (see Deuteronomy 16:16-17). Saul and his family should have been at those festivals. Saul should have known who Samuel was, even if he had never personally met him before.

What do I Samuel 3:19-21; 4:1 tell us about Samuel's standing in Israel? Put a check mark next to all that God had blessed Samuel with:

- God's favor since boyhood.
- All of Israel knew Samuel as a prophet.
- God revealed Himself to Israel through Samuel.
- Samuel's words were known to all Israel.

In other words, Samuel was well-known to all Israel! He was the human being that Israel as a nation had looked to for guidance and spiritual insight.

Briefly reread 1 Samuel 9:15-21. The Word of God has allowed us to be in on the anguish Samuel had to wrestle through privately as he faced Israel's rejection of his lifelong service to them as a nation. In between the painful revelation of God to Samuel in verses 15-17 and Samuel's obedient actions to God in verses 19-21 was Saul's reaction to Samuel in verse 18.



How would you characterize Saul's reaction in this verse?
Circle your answer:

Saul honored Samuel. Saul recognized Samuel.
Saul was clueless.



Have you ever had to relinquish something to someone who had no idea how much it cost you personally? How did that make you feel?

Girlfriends, this is real life. Saul could not possibly know how difficult his ignorant response was for Samuel to hear. If Samuel had not decided that obedience to the true King of Israel was more important than his pride, Saul could have found himself at the receiving end of a curse rather than the blessing he was about to hear.

Although Saul was completely clueless as to what God had revealed to the man of God he and his servant were looking for, Samuel knew what each step towards Saul would mean—the end of a life he had always known. With each footprint in the dust, life was changing forever. It could not have been an easy walk. Maybe you have taken a similar walk in life—one that you knew you had to make, but dreaded each step you took. Those footsteps might have led you to:

- divorce court
- the funeral of a family member or friend
- a painful conversation with a family member or friend
- a new home in a new town or country
- a demotion in a job

Obedying God and anointing Saul as king had to be one of the hardest acts of the will Samuel ever had to carry out in his lifetime. He had been in faithful service to Jehovah as soon as he was weaned from his mother. Now he had been cast off by those he had served faithfully his whole life.

Sometimes God gives us what we want. Sometimes that is the worst thing possible and the farthest thing from what would be the best for us. Saul was chosen at a time when Israel's apathy toward following the law of the Lord was at a feverish pitch. Israel wanted a king just like the nations around them. Sadly, as we will see in the next several weeks, they got just what they wanted, but certainly *not* what they needed.

Sometimes God gives us what we want. Sometimes that is the worst thing possible and the farthest thing from what would be the best for us.



Day Four: Humble Beginnings

In our last lesson, we left a clueless Saul stammering in front of Samuel, the one who had faithfully led Israel only to be rejected by the people when he became old. As a quick review, let's go back to I Samuel 9:19-20.

List the three things Samuel revealed to Saul that Samuel could not possibly have known without God's revelation:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

This is where we see the incredible mercy of God. Remember, Saul would never have sought Samuel out had the servant not had the "fee" that Saul believed Samuel would require for the knowledge of finding the donkeys. But God had already known what was going to happen according to I Samuel 9:15. God had prepared everything for Saul to step into the kingship, even though when stacked up next to Samuel, arguably, Saul did not deserve it.

Had Saul remembered in later years who put him on the throne, perhaps he could have saved himself and his family heartbreak later on.

Has that ever happened to you? Did something you worked really hard for go to someone whose moral character you questioned? Did it seem as though God had just laid out the red carpet for them and knocked down mountains He made you climb? Share here.

Saul, the donkey wrangler, has had the encounter of his life, though he does not yet know it. He thought the journey from home would merely include a sightseeing trip within the borders of the tribe of Benjamin to which he belonged. But those donkeys could not be found and Saul, thinking he could pay to have the seer of Israel "divine" where the beasts might be, ended up being placed in the seat of honor at Samuel's banquet.

Samuel has assured Saul that the donkeys have been found and that all of Israel is turned toward him in their hearts. Saul has not worked for the position about to be given to him. Circle his response to Samuel's words in I Samuel 9:21:

Boastful Humble Angry Immediate acceptance

It's very important that we take a moment to stop here and see Saul's response. Later on in the study, we will see this response in great contrast to what Saul becomes. I do not know the motive behind the humble response, but Saul clearly feels inadequate for the job, even if he did come from money and was head and shoulders taller than everyone else. Although he stood out physically, he would rather stay in the background.

When my husband turned thirty, I had a group of our friends secretly meet at a park within walking distance of our apartment. One couple came over under the guise of borrowing our charcoal grill for their own cookout. After we got to the park, we passed another couple on their way to the place we had designated for the party. We briefly conversed while I sweated in my tennis shoes hoping the secret wouldn't be ruined. Twenty minutes after we left them, I casually turned us toward the designated spot. As we approached the table, I could see that everyone was in place. I walked us toward the group and, on my cue, everyone shouted, "Surprise! Happy birthday, Rob!" My husband looked like a deer caught in headlights. As we were munching on our burgers, cooked on our grill, he turned to me for the third time and said, "Is this really for me? I can't believe it!"



Has something happened unexpectedly to you that resulted in you being the center of attention? If yes, what were some of the emotions that you experienced? Were they all happy or comfortable?

But the surprises were not to end there. Go back to I Samuel 9:25-27 and list the order of events that Saul experienced with Samuel:

We need to see something very important in verse 27. The message that Samuel was about to relate to the shocked guest of honor came from God Himself. Had Saul remembered in later years who put him on the throne, perhaps he could have saved himself and his family heartbreak later on. Scripture is silent on the exact conversation that Samuel had with Saul into the night and the next day, but Israel's desire for a king had been fulfilled.

I firmly believe that Samuel was faced with one the greatest challenges of his life—to honor someone whom he did not think deserved to be honored and place Saul in the highest seat at the banquet. His graciousness to Saul gave no hint of the inward struggle Samuel may have felt over Saul being given the best cut of meat.

My daddy always sat at the head of the table. Before we moved to Congo, we had a rectangular shaped table. It didn't matter which end of the table he sat, my mom always sat opposite him and we children were seated on the sides of the table between them. Wherever Daddy sat was the head of the table. No question. His was the seat of authority. I never felt that it should be any other

It is one thing when we believe that the other person deserves the honor, but what about when we question what in the world God is doing?

way. My father never pushed his authority down any of our throats. He gained our respect. My mother was very careful to encourage Dad's position as head of the household. It never entered my mind to begrudge my father the seat of authority at the table.

But I have been at other tables where I have fumed over who was in the seat of honor, questioning the person's right to be there. I find that it is by no mistake or coincidence that Samuel was the organizer of the dinner party. God had called Samuel to die to his own will even more.

With that in mind, answer the following questions as we look at I Samuel 9:22-24 and answer the following questions:

Who brought Saul and his servant into the hall?

Where was Saul seated and who gave him that place?

What portion of meat was Saul given and had laid it aside for Saul?

When was this portion of meat set aside for Saul?

We need to stop right here and learn something about the Jewish culture that may not be a part of ours. Listen to what Matthew Henry points out in his commentary about the symbolism of the table that Saul was honored at:

“Samuel treats him not as a common person, but a person of quality and distinction, to prepare both him and the people for what was to follow. Two marks of honour he put upon him:

1. He set him in the best place, as more honourable than any other of the guests, to whom he said, Give this man place, (Lu. 14:9). Though we may suppose the magistrates were there, who in their own city would claim precedence, yet the master of the feast made Saul and his servant too (who, if Saul was a king, must be respected as his prime minister of state) sit in the chief place, (v. 22) Note, Civil respects must be paid to those who in civil things have the precedence given them by the divine providence.

He presented him with the best dish, which, having had notice from heaven the day before of his coming (v. 16), he had designed for him, and ordered the cook to secure for him, when he gave orders for inviting the guests and making preparation for them. And what should this precious dish be, which was so very carefully reserved for the king-elect? One would expect it should be something very nice and delicate. No, it was a plain shoulder of mutton (v. 23,24).

The right shoulder of the peace-offerings was to be given to the priests, who were God's receivers (Lev. 7:32); the next in honour to that was the left shoulder, which probably was always allotted to those that sat at the upper end of the table, and was wont to be Samuel's mess at other times; so that his giving it to Saul now was an implicit resignation of his place to him. Some observe a significancy in this dish. The shoulder denotes strength, and the breast, which some think went with it, denotes affection: he that was king had the government upon his shoulder, for he must bear the weight of it; and the people in his bosom, for they must be dear to him."³

I believe that the wrestling and grief of Samuel over his ousted position as the leader of Israel under God had been dealt with before the day that Samuel and Saul dined together. My beloved sisters, what would happen if we could do the same—if wrestling with our carnal nature and finding contentment in our unmet desires was settled before God so that we were enabled to treat others with the same honor He does? It is one thing when we believe that the other person deserves the honor, but what about when we question what in the world God is doing? That is the stuff faith is made of. What truth will quell the anger and the hurt in those times we must blindly trust and obey God's direction, even when bowing our will to His confuses us to the core? I believe the answer is found in Isaiah 49:4-5 (New International Version)

***But I said, "I have labored to no purpose;
I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing.
Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand,
and my reward is with my God."***

***And now the LORD says—
he who formed me in the womb to be his servant
to bring Jacob back to him
and gather Israel to himself,
for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD
and my God has been my strength***

 According to these verses, where is what is due me?

What else belonging to me is with my God?

Who honors me and who has been my strength (or can be, by my choice)?



So often, our eyes believe only that which we can see. We forget that what is unseen is eternal. Whatever struggle Samuel may have had with God over what was happening, he ultimately made the decision to obey and leave his reward with the One he wanted to be honored by more than anyone else. When things seem so unfair after we have done everything right, we have to remember Who is keeping score. In the end, obedience always wins out, even if we have to wrestle through the experience kicking and screaming. Obedience puts us in the seat of honor when we have to honor someone as an act of sheer obedience to God. Samuel might have eaten a lesser portion of meat that day, but the true King's favor made it the most sumptuous fare he had ever tasted.

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Day Five: A Prophet's Final Instructions

I can hardly wait to dive into today's lesson. I hope that by this point in the study, you have had some "a-ha" moments. I used to overlook the humanness of Biblical characters exalted in Scripture because of the supernatural ways God used them. I thought these individuals always chose to do the right thing. I failed to look closely enough. Because of that, I would leave my quiet time with little hope, convinced that there was no way that God could ever use me in the ways He used some of them.

Eleven years ago, my husband brought into our house the single-most revolutionary spiritual tool I have ever laid my hands and mind on—the *One Year Chronological Bible* published by Tyndale ⁴. I had never had the courage to study much of the Bible before that time—period. I would realize with dismay, as each Sunday rolled around, that I had not cracked the Bible a single time since the last Sunday I had sat in church. I am not excusing my lack of self-discipline, but I have come to realize that I was genuinely intimidated by Scripture. My lack of knowledge made me come to the conclusion that I was a hopeless case when it came to understanding what certain passages meant. Spell it out for me and tell me what it means. That's what I wanted. The order of the Old Testament was impossibly confusing. Who were these prophets called Obadiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk anyway? And there was no way I was going to swim in the quicksand of ignorance and crack open Revelation!

I cannot say this more strongly, sisters. If we are only students of certain books of the Bible, we are not receiving the whole counsel of God. We cannot understand New Testament teachings in their fullness without uncovering the foundation of those teachings in the Old Testament. Satan would like nothing better than to keep us from the Word of God through intimidation. We cannot let our personal fears or insecurities keep us from Scripture. When we feel as though we are not intelligent enough to understand what is on those pages, we have the wonderful Counselor to go to with our questions. Our God is so generous. He never faults us for not having wisdom of our own and gladly gives His own when we have the courage to ask for insight (James 1:5).

 Please read Psalm 138:2 and fill in the following blanks:

"...for _____ have _____ above _____ things
your _____ and your _____."

If we are only students of certain books of the Bible, we are not receiving the whole counsel of God.



Let's understand why this is so by matching the following truths to their proper Scripture reference:

<i>All Scripture is God-breathed and useful to us.</i>	<i>Joshua 1:8</i>
<i>Jesus said that He had not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.</i>	<i>Psalms 119:105</i>
<i>Without the law, I would not know what sin was.</i>	<i>Matthew 5:17</i>
<i>God's Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.</i>	<i>2 Timothy 3:16</i>
<i>Meditating on God's law helps us to be prosperous and successful.</i>	<i>Romans 7:12</i>

Have you ever read the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation? Why or why not?

Today's lesson is going to be an example of the value of knowing God's character and others through portions of Scripture outside of I Samuel 10. Buckle your seat belts and get ready for a ride through God's Word today.

The first place we are going to stop is I Samuel 10:1-8. Please read these verses carefully and take note of anything that jumps off the page at you with this as your focus:

How could Saul know that his becoming king was God's doing?

Verse one shows Samuel's stellar character again. What two things did he do for Saul?

We are going to discover the importance of the anointing oil. Thus far in the history of Israel, this oil was only used in connection with the high priest of Israel.

Write down the significance of the oil in each of the following passages:

Exodus 29:7-9:

Exodus 29:21:

Leviticus 10:7:

Leviticus 21:11-12:

Saul was not the high priest, but he was the king of Israel, an office so sacred that the king's ordination was to be sealed with the anointing oil, known for its solemn significance. If Saul had any idea of the seriousness of what Samuel was doing, he may have refused the oil bath on his head. Saul was ordained, consecrated and dedicated to the office of kingship. The warning he received at his anointing should have left no doubt in his mind how very serious and sacred his position over Israel was in the eyes of God. If that was not enough to satisfy Saul's wondering if all Samuel was doing was to be believed, Samuel gave him three specific signs as proofs that he was speaking the truth.

Satan would like nothing better than to keep us from the Word of God through intimidation.

What were those signs in verses 1 Samuel 10:2-6?

1)

2)

3)

Without getting an understanding as to what prophesying means in this context of the story, we will struggle with troubling events later in our study. Again, I go to Matthew Henry for the explanation.

“These prophets were not (as it should seem) divinely inspired to foretell things to come, nor did God reveal himself to them by dreams and visions, but they employed themselves in the study of the law, in instructing their neighbors, and in the acts of piety, especially in praising God, wherein they were wonderfully assisted and enlarged by the Spirit of God. It was happy for Israel that they had not only prophets, but companies of prophets, who gave them good instructions and set them good examples, and helped very much to keep up religion among them... The Spirit of God, by his ordinances, changes men, wonderfully transforms them; Saul, by praising God in the communion of saints, became another man, but whether a new man or no may be questioned.”⁴

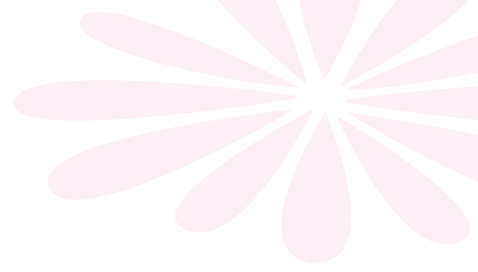
In other words, this example of prophesying emphasized praise and worship rather than predicting the future. I had always assumed that one who prophesied was a divinely inspired person who foretold dreams and visions and things to come. Matthew Henry’s perspective lends a different meaning to prophesying in this context. Let me say here that no one can possibly know what was truly in Saul’s heart at the moment this third sign played out in his life. Only the Holy Spirit can truly know our hearts (I Corinthians 2:11) when we worship with others. I remember attending youth camp when I was in high school. I came back from that week encouraged and determined to change the world for Christ. I believed with my whole heart that I was going to feel as in love with Jesus from then on as I did when I made that commitment at the altar at youth camp. My tears and sincerity were real. However, without that encouraging environment, I soon fell back into my old patterns.

Matthew Henry’s explanation for the prophesying that Saul did here denotes not a foretelling of future events, but a lavish praise service in which Saul participated in with other worshipers from the company of the prophets. Saul had an opportunity to become a different person by joining in with those who had spent their lives making God’s Word the source of their praise helps me to reconcile Saul’s behavior here in light of future events. Was Saul only caught up in the emotion produced in him by being in the company of those who made praise their way of life, or was he actually being transformed by the worship he offered? Only time would tell.



In your opinion, what is the difference between a spiritual “high” and a true worship encounter that brings lasting change. Give an example in your life experience of both.

We have been ordained and consecrated by God Himself for extraordinary lives. But with the extraordinary opportunities that this may bring, we must be diligent to never leave the presence of the God who gave those opportunities to us. Sometimes we get caught up in the emotion of worship rather than in true worship that demands a heart change. We can fool ourselves and everyone around us by getting caught up in a group of people who are



praising when our own hearts are far from it. The danger of this is that it is just a spiritual high that we are destined to fall from because the change is not real. The heart change can last only if we continue being diligent in the reading of the Scriptures and living out a life of praise.

Hard times are bound to come and we will then show what our worship has produced in our lives.

Saul has been told to look for three specific signs to come true that very day to confirm everything Samuel has told him. Don't you and I wish we had it that good? I would love for God to make His will so clear to me about taking on a new level of leadership. At this point in time, Saul had everything he could possibly need to rule Israel well.

What was to be the occasion of their next meeting and when according to verse 8?

Samuel and Saul part ways here for a week, but only after they establish a tradition between the two of them. Samuel would meet Saul at the designated time and place and prepare a sacrifice to the Lord for him. We are given every reason to believe that Saul obeyed the instructions this time. Stick that fact in the back of your mind to recall later. We are going to see the importance of waiting in obedience as it relates to this tradition between the two of them later on. So the deposed judge moves over for the new king of Israel. Hang on, girlfriends! We are in for quite an adventure in the weeks ahead. I am so thankful that you are my companion!

When we feel as though we are not intelligent enough to understand what is on those pages (of Scripture), we have the wonderful Counselor to go to with our questions.