

Life Group Lesson - Week of May 14

Even now I am watching my seven-year-old granddaughter attempt to walk backward on a balance beam. Learning to balance on a four-inch beam is hard enough in itself for this little amateur gymnast, let alone maneuvering in reverse sixteen feet. She is learning that it takes focus, muscle control, and determination. Finding balance and staying upright is hard. Thank goodness for the mats below.

Learning to balance in life is hard too, especially when we find ourselves distracted. Navigating in a difficult circumstance, or in a direction that is not natural to us takes great focus. Too often we think we have to be the super-parent that popular culture promotes and prizes. But real success in parenting, working, and living comes when we focus on God and put Him first.

Saul, the first king of Israel, looked good on the outside. He was a tall, handsome young man. But although he looked the part, his character flaws surfaced as he lived for the approval of others rather than the Lord. As Saul's fame spread, he lost sight of who God had called him to be. In order to stay balanced, king Saul should have learned what we all need to learn: that our value, our worth, our true purpose is from God. Putting confidence in the flesh, our appearance, titles, positions or past victories – anything other than God – we too run the risk of spiraling down.

Read 1 Samuel 15:10-31

God had called Saul to settle accounts with the Amalekites for opposing Israel when they came from Egypt. As an instrument of God's judgment, Saul was to lead Israel in destroying the entire Amalekite nation (see 1 Samuel 15:1-9, also Exodus 17:8-16, Deuteronomy 25:17-19).

1. Saul led Israel to destroy most of the Amalekites, but he spared the enemy king and the plunder that appealed to him. Saul *partially* obeyed God. What does partial obedience look like for you?

Is partial obedience the same as total obedience? Explain.

Often we too want to compromise and give into the pressures we face—a demanding boss, spouse, kids, our own desires. And although God “knows how weak we are and remembers we are only dust” (Psalm 103:14), He also “corrects those He loves” (Proverbs 3:12). Saul disobeyed the Lord more than once and continued in a pattern of disregard for the Lord's instructions—to the point that the Bible makes this statement: “And the LORD was sorry He had ever made Saul king of Israel” (1 Samuel 15:35b, see also 1 Samuel 15:10-11).

At first glance, it may seem Saul is humble (1 Samuel 9:21, 10:21-23). But at the end of the day, codependency is often disguised as humility, and this false humility sprouts up from a place of pride. Saul was not secure in the Lord because his ultimate desire was to please his peers. Saul showed disdain for God's anointing upon his life. Read Samuel's words: Although you may think little of yourself, are you not the leader of the tribes of Israel? The LORD has anointed you king of Israel. And the LORD sent you on a mission... Why haven't you obeyed the LORD? Why did you rush for the plunder and do what was evil in the LORD's sight?” (1 Samuel 15:17-19)

2. God's call upon us should trump all else. Are you confident in what God is calling you to do and *who* God is calling you to be *in Christ*? Or, deep down, do you long for the approval of others? Does the accolade of your peers mean more to you than God's mission over you?

If you are currently experiencing imbalance in your life, be it physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual, take a few moments and assess the condition of your heart. Seek the Lord's affirmation. Humbly ask the Lord to reveal His truth—His calling, anointing, mission over your life *again*—and He will!

When Samuel confronted Saul for his disobedience, Saul justified his actions. He said he and his men brought in the best of the plunder “to sacrifice to the Lord” (v20-21). But Samuel responded: “What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to His voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, He has rejected you as king” (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

Our worth is a gift from God. Praise His Name! The Lord didn't have to love us, but He has *chosen* to love us and has forever proven His great love for us by sending His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ “to die for us while we were still sinners” (Romans 5:8). In return, our obedience is our gift back to the Lord. Think about it: Our level of obedience is in direct proportion to our level of gratitude. Are you grateful for forgiveness from sin? Do you understand the magnitude of eternal salvation? Often this world promotes self-achievement to the point that we are tricked in to believing that we can earn a place in heaven. But the truth is this world is out of balance. The only way we can be saved from eternal separation from God is through His Christ.

3. What is your current level of obedience? Are you partially obeying the Lord in some area of your life? Consider how total obedience may very well lead to more balance. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 6:33 below. Then, write down how living into this verse would look for you in the coming week.

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need (Matthew 6:33).

Here is what obedience looks like, it is what Christ Church believes a fully devoted follower of Christ is called to do:

- a) Worshiping regularly – Including Christmas Eve, Holy Week and Easter Sunday with the family of God. We have dozens of people who hear and respond to the Gospel of Christ on these special occasions yet so many of the “church family” are not present to receive them. These Holy Days are not Holidays. They are times for the people to be present in worship to welcome new persons into the family of God.
- b) Praying for the unchurched, for leadership in the church to make wise choices, and for the physical, emotional and spiritual healing of one another and those in our community.
- c) Inviting at least five people to worship each month.
- d) Tithing to the storehouse of the Lord – the local church
- e) Learning through daily reading of the One Year Bible and Life Group participation
- f) Serving in a regular ministry at least once or twice per month.

Some persons find it difficult to tithe to the storehouse of the Lord due to their financial situation. This is why Christ Church is offering The Financial Learning Experience Sunday, May 21 at 6 to 8 p.m. at our Mt. View Campus and it is being broadcast to our Statesville Campus the same day and time.

One Year Bible Readings

- May 14: 1 Samuel 15:1-16:23, John 8:1-20, Psalm 110:1-7, Proverbs 15:8-10
- May 15: 1 Samuel 17:1-18:4, John 8:21-30, Psalm 111:1-10, Proverbs 15:11
- May 16: 1 Samuel 18:5-19:24, John 8:31-59, Psalm 112:1-10, Proverbs 15:12-14
- May 17: 1 Samuel 20:1-21:15, John 9:1-41, Psalm 113:1-114:8, Proverbs 15:15-17
- May 18: 1 Samuel 22:1-23:29, John 10:1-21, Psalm 115:1-18, Proverbs 15:18-19
- May 19: 1 Samuel 24:1-25:44, John 10:22-42, Psalm 116:1-19, Proverbs 15:20-21
- May 20: 1 Samuel 26:1-28:25, John 11:1-54, Psalm 117:1-2, Proverbs 15:22-23



Text: 1 Samuel 15:16-31

The Plain Truth

Balance occurs when you move from _____ obedience to _____ obedience.

Here is how we can step into being a fully devoted follower of Christ....

- 1. Your _____ life
- 2. _____ and finances
- 3. _____