

Characteristics of a Kingdom Revolutionary

Session #1 - A Clear Calling

Session Intro: In I Samuel 13-14, the Israelites were at a distinct disadvantage in war against the Philistines. The Philistines had an incredible “technological advantage” over the Israelites in that they were in the “iron age” while the Israelites were still in the “stone age”. The well-equipped Philistine army faced an Israelite army that was equipped with only two swords. We learn that King Saul had one of the swords, and he had given the second sword to his son Jonathan.

It seemed like the outcome of this war was sure – the Philistines had a distinct advantage in many ways. They had swords and spears. They were a brutal people who fought with brutality, and finally they had a numeric advantage. Saul’s army was immobilized by the reality of the situation, but Saul’s son, Jonathan had the strong belief that God was on their side, and that he would protect them, and in fact lead them to victory.

These two chapters are a juxtaposition. In Chapter 13 we read of Saul’s brash act of offering sacrifices in direct opposition to the order of the prophet Samuel, while in Chapter 14 we read of Jonathan’s brash act to trust the Lord in battle with the odds clearly not in his favour.

Session Objective: To help students to realize that a Kingdom Revolutionary takes action, but that action is informed by who God is, and what His word says about Him.

Minimum Prep: Read I Samuel 13:1 – 14:23. Read through the questions that follow and be prepared to provide direction and insight.

Extended Prep: Basic Prep plus: You could rent the movie “**Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade**.” At the end of the movie, they discover a room filled with “grails”. Only one is the correct Grail. As they enter the room, they are given the stern warning “choose wisely”, but not all do. This scene would be a great set-up for this discussion.

There are also a number of preparations found throughout the lesson.

Session Outline

Small Group Questions:

Leader Note: Following the movie clip, or if you are not using the movie, as simply an opening question ask:

1. **What kind of information do you gather before you make a decision? What is most important to you – the opinions of friends? The advice of your parents? Facts that you must gather? Seeking God's input? Your own feelings? Other?**

Extended Prep: Give each of the students a quarter sheet of paper with this question and some check boxes on it. Have them fill out the check boxes in order of priority in their lives, and then have them share what they checked as top priority and why.

As a group - **Read 1 Samuel 13:1-15**

2. **What was so wrong about King Saul's actions?**
3. **Read vs. 13 out loud. What are some of the keywords in this verse that indicate King Saul's decision-making process?**

Leader Note: Saul says "I thought" and "I felt compelled". He did not seek the counsel of those around him, he did not seek God's advice and he acted impetuously – based on his own feelings and compulsions. At this point you can relate the discussion from question three back to question one...how is your decision making process similar to Saul? Different? How did Saul's decision making process impact him?

4. **Why do you think Samuel spoke so strongly against King Saul?**

Now Read I Samuel 13:16 – 14:14

5. **Re-Read 14:6 – How certain was Jonathan that God would act?**

- 5.b. **How certain was Jonathan that God could act in power?**

6. **Re-Read 14:7 – How would you characterize Jonathan's servant's response to Jonathan's idea? How do you think you would respond if a leader in your life asked you to do something as crazy as what Jonathan was suggesting? What would give you confidence to follow?**

Leader Note: This question really falls into the “application for our group” category. When scriptural application is made both personal and corporate as a group, it is strongest. What implications does this passage have on us as a ministry? How an individual student would respond to a spiritual leader asking them to do something risky for God is a very important question, and a very important answer!

- 7. How were Jonathan’s decisions and actions different from his father’s?**
- 8. Did Jonathan know that his actions were “God’s will?” Why or why not?**
- 9. What does this story teach you about how you are to live out a life of faith? There are both negative lessons (Saul) and positive lessons (Jonathan).**

Leader Say: *Saul acted in direct disobedience to Samuel and to God. Often we make excuses just like Saul when we are making decisions. By basing his decisions solely on his thinking and his compulsions, he acted in direct disobedience to God. He was told to wait for seven days, but grew impatient as he saw things falling apart all around him. Often times we do the exact same thing in our own life, and then get totally confused when we experience God’s discipline.*

At the same time, Saul was also attempting to work magic to earn God’s favour. Even though he was clearly forbidden to offer sacrifices, he thought that the sacrifices would implore God to act on his behalf. He was not acting on God’s behalf, but attempting to force God to act on his behalf.

Jonathan on the other hand, did not expect anything of God. He knew God could act if He so choose, but he also knew God was not compelled to act just because Jonathan went forward in faith.

Further Reflection:

This story has so many similarities to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – consider Daniel 3:16-18, where the three young men acknowledge that God can save them, but even if he does not – it does not change anything about who God is, and their service of him. Quite a different attitude than expecting God to act because you are doing something in “his name”. This is revolutionary thinking – it is not conditional love, but unconditional devotion.

How important is this concept when we have doubts? When we don’t feel like God is near, or when we don’t feel like being in His presence? Unconditional devotion means that we act according to our convictions regardless of our feelings or our circumstances.

How could you communicate this concept to the young people in your ministry?

You may want to ask the students to think through this juxtaposition....what is the difference between us acting on God's behalf, or us attempting to get God to act on our behalf? Have the students begin to brainstorm some ways of making wise decisions in their own lives.

Maybe of critical importance is "Would you be faithful, would you trust that God is still God, even if he did not act to save you?" or "Will you decide to be faithful even when it is hard, or you don't feel like it?"

Comments and Feedback

Leader Note: This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.