1 Samuel 9-10 **Saul – The Insecure King** **November 1, 2026**

Ok, friends, this is week three of our six-week series on Samuel, Saul, and the Search for a King. Week one, we met Samuel, the prophet, priest, and judge. Last week, we heard the people of Israel demand a king for the first time ever – a sign of their fear.

Today, we meet Saul, the first king of Israel. A man who didn't seek out the kingship and was insecure from the start.

There's just no way I can read all the scripture text from chapters 9 and 10 or beyond without keeping you here longer than you need to be, so I'm going to read excerpts from it, summarize other parts, and just encourage you to read it on your own this week.

It begins this way. "There was a man . . . whose name was Kish, . . . a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. **2** He had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the Israelites more handsome than he; he stood head and shoulders above everyone else."

So far, it sounds great. Very positive adjectives. Saul sounds like the kind of guy who was popular in high school – tall and handsome with a rich dad. The kind of guy who would be homecoming king.

Then scripture says, "**3** Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, had strayed. So Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the young men with you; go and look for the donkeys."

So, they wander around looking for the donkeys. After a few days, Saul said to the young man who was with him, "Let us turn back, or my father will stop worrying about the donkeys and worry about us." But the servant to [Saul], "Hang on, I've heard about a man of God in this nearby town; he is a man held in honor. Whatever he says always comes true. Let us go there now; perhaps he will tell us about the journey on which we have set out." . . .

Anybody want to guess who this man is that the servant is referring to? This man whose words are always true? . . . . Yeah! It's Samuel! Good job!

14 So, [scripture says,] they went up to the town. As they were entering the town, they saw Samuel coming out toward them on his way up to the place of worship.

Now, the day before this, the Lord had revealed to Samuel, the prophet
16 "Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be ruler over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines, for I have seen the suffering of my people, because their outcry has come to me."

When Samuel, the old prophet, saw Saul, the tall, handsome, young man, the Lord told him, "Here is the man of whom I spoke to you. He it is who shall rule over my people." Then they meet for the first time, and Samuel invites Saul and the servant to join him for dinner, saying, "for today you shall eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is on your mind. 20 As for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, give no further thought to them, for they have been found. . . ."

This is such a power move Samuel plays. Saul doesn't even have a chance to ask about the donkeys, and Samuel just casually drops some knowledge like he can read Saul's mind. It must have spooked him a little bit.

But `Saul's response to his first encounter with this powerful prophet is a humble one. He replies, "I am only a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel, and my family is the humblest of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin. Why then have you spoken to me in this way?"

The more we get to know Saul so far, the more I like him. He's obediently working for his father. He's listened to his servant's advice about going to see the prophet. He's humbly responded to the invitation to have dinner with Samuel. So far, so good.

The next morning, Samuel, Saul, and the servant head out of town in the same direction and Samuel said to Saul, “Tell the young man to go on before us, and when he has passed on, stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the word of God.” . . . Samuel wants to have a private one-on-one conversation.

And the Bible says, “Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on [Saul’s] head and kissed him; he said, “The Lord has anointed you ruler over his people Israel. You shall reign over the people of the Lord, and you will save them from the hand of their enemies all around.”

Remember, last week we said there were multiple threats from all over.

And Samuel says, “there will be three signs on your way home that what I’ve said is true. First, you’ll come across two men who confirm that your father’s donkeys have been returned home. Second, you’ll come across three travelers and they’ll offer you food. Take it. And third, on the outskirts of a village, you’ll see a marching band. They’ll have a harp, a flute, a tambourine, and such. They’re spiritual folks, and they’ll be worshipping like Pentecostal’s do – with dancing and shouting and speaking in tongues and waving their hands.”

And Samuel says to Saul, “Feel free to join them if you want. I’ll come visit you again soon.”

I wish, really and truly, that I knew what Saul was thinking that day. He was probably in shock, disbelieving what he heard. I know I would be.

But scripture says, that all the things that Samuel said would happen did. And Saul did dance with the folks. My translation says he “fell into a prophetic frenzy along with them” and the people in the village noticed and asked, “Is Saul a spiritual guy or is he crazy?”

Finally, he gets home, and his uncle hears rumors that the prophet Samuel had invited his nephew for dinner, so he said, “Tell me what Samuel said to you.” **16** Saul said

to his uncle, “He told us that the donkeys had been found.” But about the matter of the kingship, of which Samuel had spoken, he did not tell him anything.”

Now, this is important. Just a few chapters ago, young Samuel was told something by God and his older mentor had said, “Tell me what the Lord said to you.” And Samuel, even though he was afraid to speak, revealed everything, which, we said, made him a prophet.

But in this case, young Saul is told something by God through Samuel, and when his older relative says, “Tell me what was said,” Saul withholds the biggest part of the revelation. He’s hesitant for some reason. He’s not confident about it. I wish I fully understood why. All I can do is speculate at this point.

But it becomes clear that Saul is anxious. We see that in surprising detail in the next verses.

To set this scene up, we have to remember that in chapter eight, last week, the people told Samuel to find them a king, and he sent them home because it was going to take a little time to figure out who that king would be, but now he knows, so he summons them to the town of Mizpah, and he performs this public ceremony. He has each tribe’s representatives come forward, one at a time. I would guess he started with the oldest son of Israel to the youngest. So, the tribe of Reuben comes forward, and then Simeon and then Levi and Judah and so on and so forth. Eleven tribes come up, one at a time, and Samuel shakes his head each time and says, “No, the king is not among this house. Go sit down.”

Finally, the tribe of the youngest son, Benjamin, comes forward. The anticipation is thick. The people know, by process of elimination, that we must be getting close.

Yes, the tribe of Benjamin is the tribe the king will come from, Samuel reveals. And then he asks for the individual families to step forward, one at a time, and finally, he names Saul, from the least likely tribe and the least likely family, as the chosen, anointed king of Israel. God has chosen someone who does not come from a powerful background. Many people gathered may have never heard of him or expected this

choice. This is a surprise, but, remember, God has a habit of choosing the least expected people to become important leaders, so that's actually consistent.

But guess what. Verse twenty of chapter ten says, "But when they [looked for Saul], he could not be found. **22** So they inquired again of the Lord, "Did the man come here?" And the Lord said, "See, he has hidden himself among the baggage."

Let me repeat that again. God says, "Look over there. The new king of Israel is hiding. In the corner. Behind the suitcases. Over there."

23 Then they ran and brought him from there. When he took his stand among the people, he was head and shoulders taller than any of them."

This giant of a young man, this handsome dude, was so fearful, so insecure, that he was hiding among the luggage. Again, I wish I knew what was going through his mind. It seems to me like he lacks confidence. He's not embracing the spotlight. Something inside of him is not ready to meet this moment.

But Samuel is not hesitating. He says to all the assembled people, "Do you see the one whom the Lord has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people." And, depending on how you say that, it could mean different things. Like how, in the south, when someone says, "Bless your heart," it might be a sweet gesture or it might be an insult.

So maybe Samuel is gesturing to how tall Saul is and saying, "There's no one like him among all the people!" Or he may be shaking his head and muttering, "There's no one like *him* among all the people."

Either way, all the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

And then . . . everyone goes home again. It's a really anti-climactic moment because there's no palace to move into. No government to rule. Everyone has to just . . . go home, but, about a month later, word gets to King Saul that the neighboring Ammonites are threatening the tribes of Gad and Reuben. The word is, they're going to

remove all the right eyeballs of the men in one week. I know, it's totally disgusting, but King Saul is given a message. "Come help us, quickly!"

A threat like this is exactly why the people demanded a king. But do you know what Saul was doing when he got the message? It says he was out working in his father's field. He still working for his dad! He hasn't fully embraced being king yet. But in that moment, it says, "the spirit of God came upon Saul in power when he heard these words."

He steps up. He sends a really graphic message to the rest of the tribes of Israel that says, "Come with me and defend Gad and Reuben, or I'll come and pay you a visit afterwards."

And the people respond. It says, on day seven, that the king shows up with three hundred and seventy thousand men, and they defeat the Ammonites. And that's when the people really embraced King Saul's reign, and he began to embrace it himself. After that battle, he kept four thousand men as his first bodyguards - a standing army. He established an administration. He began to rule, but friends, he never got over that anxious, insecurity he felt in the beginning, and his fear will become his undoing.

And that's what we'll talk about next week. Amen.