

Story Time with Jesus

Bible Stories

-As told by Jesus-



Book 4

Joshua and the Judges

Chapters 37-49



As told by Jesus

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- 37-Joshua, Jordan and Jericho
- 38-Gideon and the Angel
- 39-A Pitcher, a Torch, and a Trumpet
- 40-A Strong Man
- 41-Kind Ruth
- 42-Hannah's Prayer and Promise
- 43-Little Boy Samuel
- 44-Listening to God Speak
- 45-A Faithful Judge and Prophet
- 46-Samuel and Saul
- 47-King Saul
- 48-A Thunderly Demonstration
- 49-A Good Heart

Joshua, Jordan and Jericho

Before it was time for Moses to go to Heaven, God said for him to put Joshua in charge—a faith-filled, God-following man. He was to take over, and lead the Israelites into their land of promise.

Joshua had been a helper to Moses for many years, and had learned many things as a result of his training.

It was going to be a big job for Joshua, but God was just as close to him, and would powerfully help the Israelites, just as much as when Moses was their leader. The first challenge they faced, in order to get to the new country, was to find a way to cross the Jordan River—without boats, or rafts, or aeroplanes.

How were they going to do that? God had a plan. Remember that special box called “the Ark of the Covenant”? It was the box that held special things in it, especially the 10 commandments that God wrote on the tablets of stone. God told the priests—the chosen men of prayer—to carry it out to the river's edge.

Joshua told everyone that when they would see the priests carrying the ark, that it was to be their cue,

and time to cross over the river. So when they saw it happening, everyone packed up and got walking.

Then the miracle happened! As soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the ark barely touched the water's edge, the water parted making a dry path through to the other side! Everyone could then just walk across.

They had to demonstrate their obedience and their faith that God was going to help them, even without any big sign that the water was going to move out of the way. It wasn't until they did what God said, and put their toes in the water, that the miracle happened.

Sometimes, I, Jesus, want you to wait for the right time to do something, and other times you just need to jump in and start to do whatever it is that I asked of you,

even if it seems completely impossible.

Then as you do it, I will make a way and do the impossible for you.



All the people in the surrounding lands heard about this event—that the water parted for the Israelites, God's travelling team. It made the people living around there realise whose side God was on, and just how powerful He was.

Joshua had to pray and get his instructions from God for each thing they needed to do. He could have said, "I know what to do!" But that wouldn't have brought on the power of God in their lives, and would have just made a mess of things.

Joshua was very ready to listen, to pray, and to then do exactly what God told him to. The people had also learned that things always worked out best when they obeyed God's Word and instructions.

A visitor from Heaven came to speak with Joshua. He was a powerful, strong-looking man. When Joshua asked him who he was, and whose side he was on, the visitor said that he had come from God and was in charge of many angels—he was the "Captain of the Lord's Host!"

Then the same instruction was given to Joshua as was given to Moses long before, when he spoke with God at the burning bush, to "remove his shoes." Joshua did that quickly, and was ready to hear whatever this powerful visitor from God had to say.

In the land they were to live in, there was a very strong wall around its main city, but those that lived there had not learned to love and follow *God's* ways. *God* wanted His new, trained team to move in and live there instead. But to get past that wall would take a big miracle of *God*!

As Joshua prayed, *God* told him the plan—and it was something so completely different than anything they'd ever heard of, or seen done before. If you only do the things you know or think might work, when you are faced with problems—maybe problems that seem as difficult as a tall, thick and strong wall—you might not find the right solution by just using your own brain.

If you stop however, to pray and get *God's* insight, thoughts, and ideas, you might get a totally new, great, amazing, cool idea that really works! And *God* makes sure that it works by helping to do the things you can't do, because you showed your faith in His help and your willingness to do things His way.

God had instructed Joshua to have some priests carry the Ark of the Covenant, and others blowing trumpets, and a large team chosen from the Israelites to simply walk around the wall—the entire outside of the walled city of Jericho. They were to do this once every day for six days, and return each day to the camp for the night.

Then on the seventh day they were to rise extra early and do the same thing, but on that day to do it seven times! After their final walk around the city of Jericho on that last day, they were all to shout very loudly at just the time Joshua would instruct them to.



Everyone did just as God had planned and followed Joshua's instructions. Then the most amazing thing took place! The walls fell flat!

Whoever heard of that happening? The walls didn't just crack or break a bit, but fell so flat that each one could just walk straight in from where they were standing!

Talk about the power of God working for those that chose to obey all that He'd said, no matter how crazy it seemed or contrary to the "normal" way of doing things.

God can do things that are usually thought impossible! Men and women of faith can do amazing things, as God can do anything for them, if it's within His will, and brings about His plan of helping people to know about Him and His love and Word.

I can use you to do wonderful things, if you'll just do as Moses and Joshua did: Get quiet, pray, hear what I, Jesus, have to say, and then do what I tell you!

I'm there with you too, and will help you out regardless of how difficult the situation or what stands in your way. If you've got Me on your side—and you are on Mine—nothing is impossible.

Gideon and the Angel

Have you ever had to miss an activity or couldn't receive some promised reward, due to misbehaviour or failure to heed some important instructions?

Perhaps you didn't follow some safety guidelines or you forgot to bring the proper gear, and so you weren't permitted to enter into a certain area or enjoy some activity. Or maybe something else has happened that made you experience the feeling of missing out on something you wanted to do, because of not following instructions and rules.

That is what began happening to the Israelites who had been living in their new country. Remember all those instructions and rules that God had given them and that Moses had written down for them to follow?

Well, the people started to disobey, and instead of only doing things God's way and worshipping Him above all, they started to do things their own way and were doing the things that the ungodly people in the surrounding countries were doing.

Their job was to be an example of God's way and to be an influence for the better. But rather than

persevering in that job, they started to do whatever strange or ugly ideas others were getting.

People didn't have access to books and reading material as easily as you do now, and many people didn't even know how to read anyway.

When someone is working towards getting a driving license they have to read and study, to learn and remember the rules of safe driving in their country. Just one quick reading of a driving manual isn't enough to help them know it well and remember it for years to come.

When God gave the laws and rules to Moses for the people to follow, He also gave them some tips on how to remember what He said.

In order to remember His words, they needed to not just hear the Lord's words read to them once in a while; they would need to memorize portions, and teach them to their children. They would need to commit God's Word to memory.



King David, who lived much later on, said he hid God's Word in his heart. He kept it inside of him and made it a part of his thoughts, memorized it and let it be what guided him. He said that was the way to not sin, or do things contrary to what God had said. (Psalm 119:11) If you will do the same, it will make obeying and following God's Words and instructions on how to live a happy life so much easier.

You can do it every day, if you like! Choose a new verse from the Bible that you'd like to remember for a long time. Read it through, make sure you understand each word, and ask someone about the meanings of the words you don't understand. Then take one phrase at a time, and quote it again and again until you know that little portion of the verse.

Move on to the next portion of the verse, repeating and quoting—or singing it, or adding actions if you like—to help you learn it by heart. In just a few minutes you'll probably be able to quote it without looking at the page. Review it from time to time, to make sure you keep it fresh in your memory.

Now, that is one good way to "hide the word in your heart!" You'll start to experience something wonderful, once you have stored away many verses in your heart and mind. God's Spirit can remind you much more easily about a Bible verse that you are very familiar with and have committed to memory.

Perhaps you'll find yourself in a difficult moment today, and you'll be lacking faith and courage to face the situation; but then as you stop to pray, all of a sudden a Bible verse you have learned comes to mind. It might feel like your heart just got stocked up with a full tank of spiritual petrol. With the verse of God's promise empowering you, you'll feel like you can handle the problem and know what would be the right thing to do.

So those are some tips for you living in the world today; the way to keep following God's ways; and some tips on how to remember God's words and instructions.

The Israelites didn't always stay on track, and at the time of this story the people weren't going God's way. Some people weren't obeying because they forgot His instructions and hadn't committed them to memory. Others never heard it because those who knew God's laws hadn't been diligent to teach them. And some people chose to go their own way, or other ungodly people's ways, stubbornly, sinfully and wilfully.

It was very sad for God to see. It hurt Him, and it was hurting the whole country too. Not only were they not doing as God wanted, but they weren't helping the countries around them to learn of God and His right ways either.

So as night follows day, so do bad and sad times follow those who disobey God. If you are obeying Him as best as you can, things still won't be perfectly easy. That isn't the way it is on Earth, but at least you have Me, Jesus, there to help pull you out of the difficulties and to give you the courage to face them. And I'll do the miracles you need when you pray.

However, if you are doing things contrary to My will and not obeying what I've asked you to do, then things will get tough, and just keep getting worse—until you decide to change, and go God's way.

There was a large team of ungodly people called the Midianites. They were the ones that God allowed to cause the disobedient Israelites trouble, for seven years. These unkind people took food and whatever else they wanted, away from the Israelites, whenever they wanted or needed something. It made for a very difficult and troublesome time. People had to hide their food, and thresh their wheat in secret.

One man, whose name was Gideon, was doing just that when he had an unforgettable, life-changing encounter. He was hiding out by his father's winepress near a big oak tree, trying to thresh the wheat without any of the Midianites noticing him, so that his family would have food to eat.

It wasn't easy. He wasn't a big or important man and he felt like there wasn't anything he could do to change the difficult situation. But he loved God, and that's why he was chosen for a great job.

An angel sent from God suddenly appeared and told Gideon that God was with him, and called him a "mighty man of valour". Gideon didn't feel like he was, but it was nice that God thought of him as a big, brave, and strong winner! He needed encouragement to do what God was going to ask of him.

Have you ever found that true in your life, that when someone says you are good at something or encourages you in something, it makes you feel more confident that you can do it?

God knew that, with His help, Gideon would be a powerful and strong leader, helping to chase out those bothersome folks. God also knew that Gideon felt pretty low, and unable to do much good at all. He felt like everyone else in his family was better, in some way, than he was.



God wasn't interested in strong men, or well-thought of guys, or good-looking people, or those considered the most important around, or those that had lots of riches. He needed someone who loved Him and would do whatever crazy thing God told him to do—even if no one else was doing it, or it had never been done before. He needed a wholehearted, obedient guy to carry out some pretty new ideas.

God saw the heart of Gideon. He knew that just a bit of encouragement would be like the spark to light his flame of faith, and Gideon would then get going and do whatever God said. He just needed some encouragement and faith, to know that God was really with him and was indeed the one calling him to do the job.

It seemed quite unbelievable to Gideon that he would be chosen, rather than the people who seemed to be better and stronger than he was. But God saw his heart, and knew that Gideon was just perfect for the job.



Gideon liked to be totally sure of God's will, and wasn't going to run off and do anything unless he was absolutely convinced it was God's will for him to do it. If God was calling him to do a big and important job—to save Israel from these troublesome people—well, he was willing and was certainly glad for it to happen, but he wanted to be convinced that it really was God calling him.

The first thing he wanted to do was to make sure that this really was an angel sent from God. He begged the angelic man to not leave, but to wait for him to bring some food.

The angel agreed, and waited. Now it wasn't just a quick "grab something out of the fridge" dash, while the angel waited a moment. It took some time, as he had to build a fire and cook it first. However, when Gideon returned with the food, the angel had kept his promise and was still there.

The angel instructed Gideon to put the meat and bread on a rock, and to pour the broth all over it, making it very wet. Does water burn?

Well, when this angel then touched the food with the tip of his staff, fire came bursting out of the rock below it and burned everything up—the food and the watery broth!

This looked pretty impressive, and was a clear sign to Gideon that indeed this was an angel sent from God. It humbled him and made him desperate to be right with God, and to be sure to obey Him too.

So Gideon chose in his heart to take on the job that God was calling him to do; but he still wanted to just double and triple check that it was indeed God's will for him to be the one to do it.

When talking with God later on, Gideon humbly asked if he could have another supernatural sign shown to him, to give him an extra boost of faith. So Gideon took a fleece of wool and placed it on the ground, and asked God to do something that was normally impossible.

He said to God, "If in the morning the fleece is wet from the dew but the ground all around the fleece is dry, then I'll know that I am meant to be the one to save Israel, as You have said."

God honoured his prayer, and the next morning the fleece was so wet that Gideon squeezed a whole bowl full of water out of it! -And the ground? Yes! It was totally dry.

How did God stop the normal falling of dew on that area of land and make a whole lot of water soak into the wool? God knows tricks!

Gideon was getting excited! He was just about ready to blast off and get going on his new mission, but he thought to triple check. He knew the job wouldn't be easy, and people could make things pretty tough for him, if it was just little him out there trying to chase away multitudes of people. But he knew that if God was the one calling him, then he had nothing to worry about.

"Please don't be upset with me," Gideon prayed, "but can I ask you, God, for one more sign, so I can be totally sure that it's me that You want to use to do this job?"

Then, Gideon asked God to do the request from the last time, in reverse. He asked for the sign of God confirming His will to be that the wool would be totally dry, and the surrounding ground all wet.

Have you ever left your laundry on the line outside over night, in a place where plenty of dew falls? Even if the clothes are dry before the sun sets, by morning, they are all quite wet again.

So for the ground to be wet and show the evidence that dew had fallen all around, but the wool left outside on the ground to be dry, would again take a miracle.

God wanted to do all He could to give Gideon the faith to take the plunge and get on with the very needed job of getting people to start going His way

again, and to start changing the situation for the better. God did, once again, just as Gideon had prayed, and the ground was wet, but the wool on it was totally dry.

Gideon had all the faith he needed, and was committed to doing everything that God asked of him, no matter what it was, to bring relief to the land of Israel.

A Pitcher, a Torch and a Trumpet

To realise how challenging the situation was, and just what Gideon and his team were facing, take a look at this verse from the Bible describing how many people were causing the Israelites trouble:

"The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude." (Judges 7:12)

Knowing this will help you to understand why Gideon chose to gather such a large team of 32,000 men when he first started out. Even that didn't seem like many, compared to the large number of Midianites and the many others with them.

However, if there was a very big team of Israelites helping, God knew it would be easy for them to give themselves the credit for doing the job. They might rely on their own strengths and abilities, rather than depending fully on God. God's plan was for them to know for certain that it was Him who was helping them.

If they depended only on their own abilities, the miracle may never have happened. God needed a team

that would give Him a chance to do the impossible through them. Gideon's team showed through their obedience to Him, that they had the faith that He could do anything. This is what would make the miraculous become a reality.



God can do things with many or with few. In this case, He wanted to use just a few, to show His power. He wanted to encourage the Israelites that

He was still their God of miracles, and was still there with them. He wanted them to turn to Him, to believe on Him, and to love and follow Him.

So who would Gideon send home? How would he make the team smaller? God gave the first instruction. Whoever didn't have the courage needed, and wasn't filled with faith that God could do the miracle, would no longer be a part of this team. When Gideon told this to his large team, 22, 000 men left and returned home. That was a lot! Now, their team was less than one-third the original size it had been!

Gideon might have felt that it was sufficient, and definitely a small enough team! But no! God wanted the team to be much smaller than that, so His next instruction was given. Gideon did just as God said.

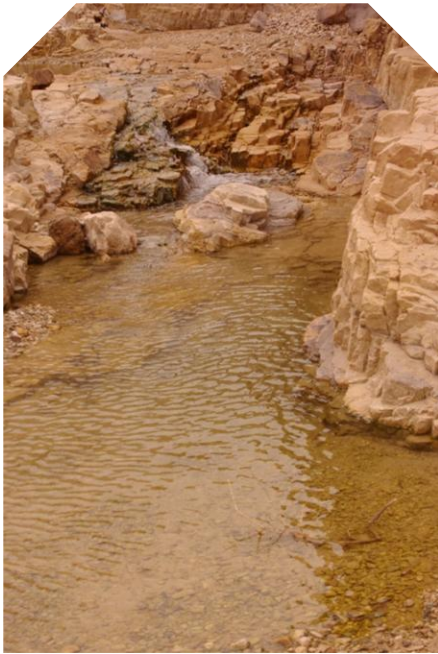
The men were taken to the water to drink. (Remember, they didn't have running water at home, they drank from the stream.) They didn't have cups or water jugs to drink from on that day, just their hands and mouths.

Have you ever tried to drink like that? You can cup your hand and drink a bit at a time like that, or you could just put your mouth right into the pool of water and drink it directly. These were the two ways the people were drinking from the river that day.

When your head is up and your hands are bringing the water to your mouth, you are much more aware of what is going on around you, and you can see more than if you drink with your face very near or in the water.

God said that whoever used their hand to scoop up the water and drink it that way, was to be called out and set aside in one area.

Everyone who bowed down to drink, with their mouth right in the water, was to be sent home. Those watchful and more careful guys were chosen to be on the team. However, most people didn't drink that way!



There were only 300 men that used their hands to drink. So that meant that all the rest of the remaining 10,000 men were no longer with them.

Did God realise that this would happen? That there wouldn't even be 1,000 men left, not even half of 1,000 left—just 300? Yes, God was completely in control and aware of it.

This was just the amount He was happy with.

Why didn't God just tell Gideon at the very beginning to only have 300 men on his team? Well, He did it this way for many reasons. As the team got smaller and smaller, Gideon's faith got bigger and bigger! It helped him gain the faith, as he kept following God's Words and instructions to him.

Sometimes, the things God needs His people on Earth to do for Him sound quite challenging, and at first it seems like it wouldn't work. --And it wouldn't, if God wasn't the one doing it.

It was a stretch of Gideon's faith already, to say yes and to do what God had asked him to do. If he had

been told right at the start that not only was he meant to chase away countless people from the land of Israel but also to do it with a team of only 300, that might have been a bit too much for him to understand, and he might not have had the courage to do it.

So God led him one step at a time-- first with many people, then with fewer, until at last it was the right amount. Gideon had the faith that it was good and right, and that God would do miracles for them and with them.

Also, starting off with a much bigger team gave many people a chance to be part of the team, at least for a while. They had the opportunity to choose to have faith and to be good members of the team. But God didn't just want 300 men; He wanted 300 obedient and faith-filled people.

When at last the team was ready, the small and courageous team, God gave them their next instruction.

The Midianites were peacefully sleeping, after many of them had filled their bellies with food taken from the Israelites, and were snug in their tents. All of a sudden, a tremendous, loud sound woke them! It sounded like a zillion people yelling, and like just about the whole world was there, waking them up.

These 300 men did their part. They broke the clay pitchers that God told them to bring, blasted out their

trumpets as loudly as they could, and yelled at the top of their lungs. Then God made those sounds, in the stillness of the night, to be amplified in the Midianite's ears. They all awoke with a start, and got jogging!

"Let's get out of here!" they yelled, and made a rushed and scared dash for it. If they had only known that it was such a small team that had made all that noise, they would have just laughed and gone back to sleep. It was crazy to think that such a huge multitude could be scared off by just a few hundred guys!

God made it so very startling for the Midianites, and put it in their hearts to be really afraid and to want to get out of there in a hurry. If you do what God tells you, then He'll do what you can't do and fill in all the rest.



A Strong Man

This is a story about a man, who with God's strength was able to tackle anything he needed to. He has been known as the strongest man that has lived on Earth. His name is Samson. But even his strongest acts are nothing compared to the strength of God.

Anything is possible to those who believe and obey what I tell them to do. Just because something is impossible, or is thought to be so, is never an obstacle for Me. I can do anything for you and through you and with you, if it's the best thing, and you are praying for My help.

Samson was the man sent to help at a time of great difficulties, when yet again the people of Israel had strayed away like a lost sheep from a shepherd. God wasn't pleased at what His people were doing and their continued disobedience, and this time they had trouble with a group of people called Philistines, who were doing very wrong and bad things at that time.

Since the Israelites were no longer staying close to God and choosing to do things His way, God couldn't protect them and do great miracles for them. This went on for many years, and at last many of them were ready

to listen and to change, and were eager to find relief from the troubles that they were having at that time.

God's plan was a new and interesting one. He was going to send the Israelites someone to be a judge and a helper to them, and begin to stop the wrongs that the Philistines were doing. This time God wanted the person to start out as a baby, and to be trained in just the right ways, in order to do the job that God had in mind.

There was a man called Manoah, and he and his wife loved and respected God, but had no children. God chose them to be the parents of this special person He was sending to Earth. To announce it and bring the message from God to this couple, God sent an angel to speak with the woman. He told her that not only was she to have a child, but also let her know a few important things.

There were special instructions that needed to be followed, in order for God to give them the gift



of this special son. The angel told this woman that she was only to eat good food, and not to drink any wine, or

strong drinks like that. The child also was to never have his hair cut. It would be as a symbol that He belonged to God, and was a sign of their obedience and commitment to do things His way.

Manoah, her husband, wasn't there at the time, but soon heard about it from his wife! He was very eager to know more about this unexpected and special news that the angel told his wife.

Manoah very much wanted to meet this angel also, as he wanted to make sure they knew what to do, and how to care for this child in the way that God wanted him to be raised and trained. If this son of theirs was to do the big job of helping the Israelites in their time of trouble, Manoah wanted to do just as God wanted them, as his parents, to do. Manoah prayed for the angel to return—and it happened!

Manoah's wife was outside sitting in the field when the same angel came again to speak with her. Knowing how much Manoah wanted to talk with him, she ran as fast as she could to call her husband. The angel waited there, and when both Manoah and his wife returned, he spoke to them together, explaining God's instructions to them.

It's very important for parents to pray and ask for guidance in the care and training of their children. As a result of these parents' careful attention to God's

instructions, their son Samson was well prepared to face the difficult job he had.

Things weren't easy at all in the land of Israel, and many sad and disappointing things happened throughout his life. Samson knew however, that God was with him and was taking care of him, and he just needed to do the best he could to obey God's instructions.

God gave him amazing strength of body at the times he needed it, and strength of skill, and speed, and quick reflexes to do things others hadn't done before.

Samson loved, and respected, and chose to obey God. He kept his hair long also, as God told him to do. Samson's heart was guided by the Lord, and he did some amazing things, and saw some incredible miracles occur.

One time he caught 300 foxes on his own! Another time when he was very thirsty and there was no water around, he prayed and God made water pour out of an old bone on the ground.

Samson had tremendous strength at just the right times, as God gave it to him. One time those troublesome folks were trying to stop him, and locked the huge and heavy gates of a city, to try to keep him in there. Samson was given the strength to pull up the gate posts and walk away carrying the weighty gates!

Any type of rope or cord he could break. One time God even gave him the strength to push down a whole

building, as it was used by the ungodly people, and God wanted it taken away.

Whatever God needed him to do, he could do. When Samson prayed God did the miracles needed, and Samson knew it was God who was helping him. Samson helped to teach the Israelites God's way, and was a faithful judge in the land of Israel for 20 years.

God gave him strength in many different ways. Samson was given strength of heart, to bear with sad times and heartbreaks and all the things that didn't work out as he wished they would in his life.

There was nothing easy about his life. Many things went contrary to the way he would have liked them to be. People disappointed him, some were unkind, others deceived him, and people mistreated him. Yet he stayed true to God no matter what.

God gave him strength of will, also, to not give up but to do whatever he set out to do, as he felt God leading him, and to complete the tasks.



Even though some things didn't seem to others like the best thing to do, he stayed focused on the job and on the leading in his heart from the Lord, and wasn't swayed by the opinions of others.

God gave him strong faith in spite of all the hardships that were going on around him, and having to be often around people who had little or no faith in God. Samson kept believing, praying, obeying, following, and depending on God throughout his life. When he prayed, God answered, and that was the true source of his amazing strength in all ways.

Samson had strength to keep secrets—some he kept for years and years! He didn't just say everything that was on his mind to whoever



happened to be around. He knew his life belonged to God, and that he had an important job to do. He was careful with his words, and knew that words can affect people and situations.

One secret he kept was that his long hair was special. Everyone knew he had long hair, but they didn't

know why, and how his obedience in never cutting it was connected to God blessing him with strength.

He may have been asked all kinds of questions many times as he grew up, and as a man, why his hair had never been cut, and what was the secret to his strength. But some things are important to keep between you and God. Only Samson and his parents knew this secret.

Sometimes it's best not to say things, if it's to the wrong people who won't help you in your mission for God. Once, towards the end of his life, someone he loved pressured him so much to tell her this secret. He didn't want to see her acting so sad, as he loved her. At last he told the secret, and soon after that she wanted to try it out, and cut his hair.

It is a very sad and hurtful thing to do, to betray someone's love and trust, and it made Samson so very sad. It also removed God's special strength from him for a while, and during that time he was no longer able to do his job of helping to teach and protect the Israelites.

However, God has a way of working things out in the end, and later after he prayed with all his heart, he was given new strength again to put a stop to many of the Philistines as a result.

Samson's life is an example that with God helping you, anything is possible. Though some people say that it was his hair that gave him strength, it was really his obedience and dedicating his life to God that brought on the blessing and the miracles.

Even the cutting of his hair and the temporary loss of strength was an example to the people of Israel of what they had been doing, in a way. They had not kept God's instructions, and stayed special and dedicated to the Lord, and thus had lost His blessings and help for a while.

The example of Samson then praying and receiving new strength after his time of weakness and difficulty showed the Israelites that if they, too, would pray for help, and turn to God, wanting to do His will again, He could do miracles for them.

Kind Ruth

Elimelech, his wife Naomi and their two sons had hit hard times. A famine was in the place where they stayed, in the land of Judah, so they moved elsewhere. This was to be a special family, and God was watching over them, and they had what they needed in Moab.

Sometimes things seem very difficult, or like they aren't going just the way you imagined that they would, but for those who love Him and are following Him, God can do some wonderful things for you in the end. Sometimes things seem to get worse at first, but that's just because it's paving the way for the best things that are yet to come.

There is also something that is hard for people who are still on Earth to see any good in, and that is when those they love pass away, and are no longer around to be a friend, a help or a support. Often things can seem harder without them around, and it makes people sad.

It is good to realise that this life on Earth is just a very small part of your real life! It's just a little trip, or like a life study course. Your spirit and eternal soul lives on forever. So when people naturally pass away, it

just means that their trip is over, and they can finally return home—to live with Me in Heaven!

For those that don't know Me when they pass away, well, God loves them too, and still looks after them and puts them in the place that is best for them. They can still learn about Me and learn whatever lessons they need to, even after they pass from this earthly life. Isn't that amazing?

Of course those who have learned about Me and have received My gift of love and forgiveness while on Earth will have the free entry into Heaven's open doors right away. So that's why it's very important that as many people as possible are given the chance to be told about Me and My wonderful love, and to be taught how to accept Me, Jesus, as their Saviour and way to Heaven.

When those you love and are close to are no longer in this world with all these hard times and troubles, you can be glad for the peace and beauty that they can have at last. It's easy to just think about your loss and how sad you feel, but for them, it may be



the happiest day of their life!—Especially those who love Me and have done their best to use what time they had on Earth to do as I wanted them to, and showed love.

Those who were generous will receive a generous reward. Those who were mainly trying to gain things for themselves while on Earth will see in the end that it didn't bring as many wonderful things their way in the Heavenly life to come.

This story tells of a time of sorrow and loss, but ends with the very wonderful results of a life lived in love, to help others.

Elimelech and his family lived in the land of Moab for several years, and there his grown-up sons got married. God wanted a kind lady from that land to be a part of their family, and she married one of Elimelech and Naomi's sons. Another nice lady called Orpah married the other son.

Then the clouds of sorrow came, at least that's the way it felt for this family, as some of them passed away—the father and both the adult sons. There was only Naomi, Ruth and Orpah left. What was meant to happen then?

Naomi had heard that the famine was over and there was food again in the land of Judah, and since she had relatives there as well, she decided to move back

there. Naomi told Orpah and Ruth to return to their families and parents. After much convincing, Orpah did that. But Ruth couldn't imagine leaving Naomi alone and she was determined to stay with Naomi, who was like a mother and friend to her. She wanted to take care of Naomi, since she was getting older.

Naomi and Ruth travelled to Bethlehem, and it was at the time of the harvest. There was a tradition that the poor could pick up any scraps and bits and pieces



that the harvesters dropped. So Ruth went to where a field was being harvested and began to gather the bits and pieces that were left over. That way she and Naomi would at least have some food to eat.

Boaz was the name of the man who owned the field, and he asked the reapers if they knew who this woman was.

When he found out that she was Ruth, the kind woman who had chosen to take care of Naomi, and that she was actually a relative of his, he was glad to meet her.

Boaz wanted extra kindness shown to Ruth. He even told the reapers to drop extra barley on the ground for her to gather, so that she and Naomi would

have what they needed. When it was time for the harvesters to stop for lunch he invited Ruth to come eat with them, and said that during the day as she gleaned and picked up the grain, she could drink water from the water jars that were filled for the reapers. Ruth was so very grateful and also surprised, as she was from another country, but was being treated so well.

By the end of the day she had gathered a lot of grain to bring home and cook. Naomi was so pleasantly surprised and wondered what great field she had gathered grain from. When Naomi found out that it was the field of Boaz, her relative, she was very encouraged. God had led them to just the right place and was providing for them. And every day of the harvest Ruth was allowed to gather grain in the field of Boaz.

Boaz loved Ruth and chose to marry her. They were blessed with a cute little baby who they called Obed. Naomi was a happy grandmother to the little one, and loved holding baby Obed and caring for him. They were a happy family. God had cared for them well and given them the best. And there was something extra special about this family as well.

Ruth was to be the great-grandmother of King David—for he was Obed's grandson. And they were also the ancestors of My father on Earth, Joseph the carpenter. So Ruth was like My Earthly great-great, and

many more greats, great-grandmother! A humble and kind woman was chosen to be that.

So you see, the people whom I consider important and who I use to do noteworthy jobs aren't necessarily those that are big and famous and rich and well-thought of in the eyes of the world. I look on people's hearts, and choose who to give honour to according to the choices of love and faith and obedience that they make.

People who did wonderful jobs and are well-thought of today, or were well thought of in the Bible times, weren't well-thought of or rich or famous or strong or important at the time.



Most of the time things weren't so glamorous and they were given quite a bit of trouble by those who knew them at the time, as they led difficult and humble lives. But they chose to obey My call to them, to do what I needed them to do, no matter what others said or did and in spite of how hard things were for them at the time.

Who knows what your acts of simple faith in My words and love for others will lead to, and what you or your children will be called on to do later on as a result.

When Olympic champions are training all those years before they take part in the Olympics there are no shining gold medals given day-after-day for their hard effort.

There is no big announcement and great acclaim made across the world about how they worked hard that day to gain strength and stamina. It's just a bunch of tough work, while they keep focussing on the goal in mind.

If they happen to win the gold or silver or bronze medals at the final competition then many people hear about them. But if it wasn't for all those years of training and keeping up the hard work they would never have received it.

What loving deed do you think I want you to do today? Who do I want you, personally to help? It will never make you feel very glorious, nor will you be famous for it—not yet. But for those who have the faith to love Me anyway, to love and care for others anyway, to have faith that what I say is true no matter what, then one day I, Myself, will give you a spectacular heavenly reward, and many will eventually hear about your wise and wonderful choices.

Can I count on you to be a winner, in the end? I hope so! Just do the little jobs, the kind and humble deeds; pray the little prayers; give others the best, and love Me with all your heart and strength. Then greater joy will be yours—more than you ever dreamed was possible. I know you'll feel it was worth it.

Hannah's Prayer and Promise

Parties, celebrations, festivals, feasts, trips to visit relatives, barbeques and get-togethers can be fun! But happy times are only happy if there is love among those taking part in the activity.

If someone is making things real hard for you and causing you to feel sad and bad it can ruin the whole experience. That's what a woman named Hannah felt like.

"Oh dear! It's almost the time of the feast again," Hannah's heart would say, for each year she and other relations would travel and meet together in Shiloh. The Priest Eli and his sons were living there. Hannah and her husband, Elkanah, would go to that place to pray and worship. They'd eat a big meal, see friends, and then travel home again. This happened once a year.

It was a time many people enjoyed—but not Hannah, because of someone's unkind words to her every year at the feast and time of



worship in Shiloh. Even after being married for a long time, Hannah had no children, and this was very hard for her.

This alone was enough to sadden her. But to add to her sorrow a lady called Peninnah, who was also the wife of Elkanah, had lots of children. This woman, instead of showing kindness and sympathy to Hannah, instead would say discouraging words to her, making her feel very bad and sad.

One time it was just too much for Hannah and she went to get alone to pray. Priest Eli was sitting down and watching what was going on around him, and saw Hannah kneel in fervent prayer. She was telling God all that was on her heart. She knew He was the only one that could help her. There was not a single person on Earth that could help her suddenly be able to have children, but God could, so she prayed for that miracle.

Hannah prayed a very special prayer. Sometimes when you really want something, you are willing to give up something in order to get it, right? Hannah knew that if it was God's will for her to have a child, and if she was doing the things that pleased Him, then it would become a reality. She prayed an "extreme prayer" and promised God that she would do something very special and unusual—if He would give her a little boy.

"If you give me a little boy, I promise to let him serve You, Lord, all his life," Hannah promised. She desperately wanted to do God's will and wanted to be worthy of His gift of a child. Those were like the magic words and decisions of her heart.

God was waiting for a mother and father to give a special child to—but they would have to be parents that would let their child learn God's ways most of all. Not people that would just try to have their child only do whatever they thought the child should do, or teach the child whatever skills or trades they wanted their child to grow up and do.



But who would be willing to let their child learn God's ways?

Samson's parents were willing, and raised their child according to what God wanted, and he was used of God to be a good judge. Hannah

was a woman who was also willing. She wanted a child, and promised that if she had a son, he would be dedicated to God. Similar to what Samson's mother was told to do about not cutting Samson's hair, Hannah said she would not cut her child's hair either, as a promise that he was God's special child.

Hannah had been praying with all her heart, but her words weren't heard out loud, only her lips moved. Priest Eli saw her praying but didn't know what she was praying for. At first he started to reprimand her, as it looked like she was acting rather odd.

Since it was the time when people were drinking wine for the feast, he wrongly concluded that she'd had too much to drink. However, when he talked with her, she explained that she was just very sad and was praying. Eli then encouraged her saying that God had heard her prayer and would answer.

Sometimes after a real good time of praying you can feel that peace and faith in your heart and be just as happy as if you had gotten what you were praying for, right then. Then to have Eli also encourage her, and say that he knew God would grant her request, made her smile and go happily on her way—even though she didn't yet have a child. She had faith in her heart after praying and making things right with God.



It wasn't long before Hannah and Elkanah received the special child—the prayed for child that she named Samuel, meaning "God has heard." His name reminded people that he was an answer to prayer.

Little Boy Samuel

Different people are called to serve Me in different places and in different ways. If you learn about the lives of those who have served as missionaries around the world there is a lot of variety in what each one was called to do, according to what jobs needed to be done and where My love needed to be shown.

Before someone who's called to do something particularly special or unique for God, they need training. Just like anyone who does a job in this world has to learn the skills that will enable them to do the jobs. What if a baker had never even touched a raw lump of dough in his life, would he be able to run a bakery and be able to tell people how to make good bread?

Or what if an engineer wanted to design a big building, but he had never learned how to build and all the many things that went into safe and strong construction work and how to make buildings that would last?

Everyone needs training and preparation in order to do a good job and make a positive difference, and not just make a mess of things instead.

Well, God had an important job for someone to do. Things weren't going so good in the tabernacle. There were some disobedient and disrespectful men that were causing trouble. The priest Eli did the best he could to help people to get closer to God, but not everyone was making the right choices, and Eli was getting older too. Someone needed to be around to point people in the right direction.

After praying desperately for a child, and being given one, Hannah was so very happy! She loved her son Samuel very much, but didn't forget her promise. She wanted him to be a special child and to follow God all his life.

Instead of attending the yearly feast, when Hannah was caring for her new little baby, she stayed home each year, until Samuel was old enough to live with Priest Eli. When the time was right, Hannah and Elkanah brought their young son along with some gifts, and went to visit Priest Eli at the feast in Shiloh.



"Remember me?" Hannah said, "I was the woman who was praying here, and you said God would answer my prayer. And He has! This is the child I was praying for. I'd like him to learn the Lord's ways and live here."

So Priest Eli took care of Samuel, and even let him be dressed in some special clothes—child-size ones of the same style that Eli would wear. Because he was in training for an important job when he was older, he was given special privileges that no other child received.



It wasn't always easy for him to be away from his mother and father and family, but he was able to learn things that none of the other children had the chance to learn. And just like

My promises say to you in the Bible, I was very close to him and made sure that he had all that he needed.

When Hannah brought Samuel to stay and live with Priest Eli and learn of God's ways she offered praise. She was so glad for the miracles—the miracle of finally having a son, and the miracle that he would get to be a special servant of God and be trained in God's ways and with His words.

Samuel grew year by year and gained strength and wisdom, and each year Hannah would bring him a new coat that would be big enough to fit him for the next year. Priest Eli prayed for God to bless Hannah and Elkanah with more children, and that's what happened. They had five more children—three boys and two girls.

Listening to God Speak

Samuel was faithful day by day to do what he needed to do. It was a great help for Eli, who was also the judge of the people of Israel, to have Samuel's help. Eli was getting older and couldn't see very well and needed help with things like making sure the special oil lamp was always shining and had enough oil.

Samuel knew about God and learned His ways as Priest Eli taught him, but for the first years as he grew and gained strength and wisdom he didn't know or talk to Me personally as a friend. He didn't learn to hear God's voice and words right from the start, but when the time was right he was given the special gift of being able to hear God's words clearly.

This is what he would need in order to do the job he was called to do—to be the next judge after Priest Eli, and to be a prophet passing on God's Words and instructions.

As Samuel grew and learned things, one of his jobs was to sleep at night in a very special place—he was near the Ark of the Covenant, that special box that God had instructed Moses and the travelling team of Israelites to make, and it was a sign of God's presence.

He was very quick to help, as well as to obey when Eli had a need or called for him—even if it was night time. That helped to prepare him for the most important responsibility of all—obeying Me and My words. For it was when people stopped doing that, that there were troubles. This is what Samuel needed to be strong in if he was to do his job well.

It can seem like you are only listening to and obeying your parents on Earth, but if what they are saying to do is the right and Godly thing, then obeying them helps you get good practice at following the instructions and words from Me, your Heavenly Father.

Samuel had to give up being with the rest of his family, and sometimes it was lonesome. Often the most important and special jobs that are needed feel rather lonely at times, as they are jobs that are difficult in some ways, and not everyone on Earth is eager to rush and do them. And some jobs can only be done right if those doing it have plenty of time alone—like Samuel's job of one day being a prophet and judge; it required lots of quiet time in prayer and hearing God speak.

One night Samuel was sleeping as usual but something unusual happened—it was the first of many times in his life that he heard God talking to him. He heard a voice clearly calling him. Sure that it was Eli calling for help, Samuel got up and ran quickly to him. Eli

was surprised to see Samuel showing up there and told him to go back to sleep and that he hadn't called.

Samuel knew that he'd heard someone calling his name, but if it wasn't Eli then who was it? There wasn't someone else around right there. Obediently Samuel tried to go back to sleep, but he was again clearly summoned.

"That was definitely someone calling me. I heard it with my own ears!" Samuel was thinking, and ran to see what Eli needed. Again Eli told him that it wasn't him calling. This then happened a third time. Eli realised that something special was happening, and that God had chosen to introduce Himself personally to Samuel through talking to him in an audible way, as He had something to tell him.

"Next time you hear the voice, say, 'Speak Lord, for Your servant is listening.'" Eli told Samuel.

And that's just what happened. So when Eli didn't see Samuel showing up by his side again



that night he knew God was talking to him, and he was eager to find out the next day what God had said.

Things weren't perfect and there had been some very troublesome people that weren't respectful and obedient to God's Words and ways and it was making it very hard for people in that place to know clearly what was the right thing to do. Sadly, it was Eli's grown sons who were making God and Eli and many others very sad.

People make mistakes and have to learn the right way to do things, but because these naughty guys weren't given enough training and discipline and told to stop doing the things that were wrong, that is what was very displeasing to God.

If people do the wrong thing and then are allowed to keep doing it, and those who know that it is making God unhappy and making others unhappy don't do anything to stop them, then it just makes things get worse. Those people just keep going down the wrong way and soon others start to follow them instead of following in God's way. They then begin to think that it must not matter, until some big and difficult consequences have to happen to get everyone back doing things the good, loving, and Godly way again.

Fathers and mothers need to teach their children the right and loving and Godly way to be, according to what God has said. This is what will make things go well,

and help people, families, towns and countries to be happy and pleasant.

If the parents are the ones responsible for leading the people in God's way—like Eli was—and if they don't teach their children to do things according to God's word, and don't give consequences for choosing the wrong or hurtful ways, then others think it must not actually be important to obey God. And that's a big mistake that will have bad consequences on many people.

What happens when drivers don't stop at a red light or they start driving on the wrong side of the road

where the cars are coming the opposite direction? Trouble, danger, harm, accident, and sorrow too!

Samuel didn't have his parents there with him, and he needed to know clearly what was the right thing to do in order to be prepared for his job of telling everyone God's Words, rules, advice and instruction. God didn't

want him to be misled by those other bad examples.



So on that night Samuel began to hear the voice and Word of God speaking and talking with him. It helped to encourage him and bring him closer to God and help him to know the right way to be.

The message that was told to Samuel made it clear to him what was right and wrong about the situation with those disobedient and foolish men, so that he could choose to do things God's way. Samuel was very still and quiet, and respectfully listened to every single word that was told him—and he remembered it well.

When Priest Eli asked him the next day what God had said, Samuel told it all to him. It wasn't a fun message, and Samuel didn't even want to tell Eli, but Eli loved God and wanted to hear whatever it was—even if it was a difficult, correction type of message from the Lord.

God wanted Samuel to know that there would be consequences and negative outcomes for those men, Eli's sons, who were setting such a bad example. Eli believed God's words and humbly accepted the lesson God wanted to tell him and all the people: that it's important to teach children God's way and to stop them from setting a bad example that leads others astray.

Even if parents are very busy helping others—like Eli was for 40 years—they need to make sure to take

time with their children, talking with them, teaching them God's Word, helping them to memorize it and to live it; and to give guidelines, training and correction for doing things that are wrong. If they don't, then it just makes things sad for everyone.

When Abraham followed and obeyed God he was blessed with a son, Isaac, who followed and obeyed God—and so did his son Jacob. After many years there were many descendents, like God had promised.

The people living in the country when Samuel was there came from those original "fathers of faith" and their descendents. Everyone knew about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and those men were good examples of obedience to God's word and doing the things God asked them to do.

However, because Eli's sons didn't go God's way—even though their father Eli was showing the example to them and others, and because Priest Eli didn't discipline them for doing things that weren't good or when they showed great disrespect for God, there wasn't that same blessing for them.

They didn't have many descendents, and Eli's sons were not to be the next judges. This is what was explained to Samuel that night, when he first heard God speaking to him.

From then on Samuel was a prophet, a called and chosen one who loved hearing from God and wanted to always follow what God had said. People knew that he was a prophet of God, and Samuel loved hearing and reading and obeying God's Words so very much. It was the most important thing to him, and he wanted others to do it too.

A Faithful Judge and Prophet

When Samuel started out as God's prophet and the judge of the Israelites, he noticed that many people hadn't been obeying God and His words. Because of this there was trouble from other nations who were giving the people of Israel a hard time. Then one day something shocking and troubling happened.

Some of the Israelites got the idea that God would help them if they just had the Ark of the Covenant with them, so they went and took it out of its very special place and carried it away to the place in the land where the Philistines were giving them the hardest time. Priest Eli was very shaken and upset by this.



Was that what was needed? Was a box going to help them? They might have thought so because, "when the priests carried the Ark of the Covenant

over the Jordan river it parted; and the walls of

Jericho also fell down when it was carried around the city; and..." They remembered the amazing miracles the Lord had done.

But was it really the box that did it? No. It was God who was with them and as they heard from Him, worshiped Him and obeyed Him then He did the mighty miracles. So what was needed was for the people to put God first in their lives and to obey Him. Samuel was the one God had chosen to help them do that.

When the Ark of the Covenant was brought to the place where the Philistines were causing so much trouble, the people of Israel were so excited at first and made such a great noise together that it seemed like the ground shook! The Philistines found out the reason and began to be afraid.

"Oh no! It's the Ark of the Covenant! We are losers! We are so weak compared to God's power!" they were thinking. And it's true, they were. But God likes to use His power to help those who love and obey Him, and most of the Israelites, even though they were happy for the Ark of the Covenant being there, just wanted some relief from the troubles.

Their hearts weren't sorry for their wrong doings and how far they had walked away from God's ways. The country hadn't changed; they just wanted the difficult consequences of their bad choices and wrong doings to

go away. They weren't desperate and praying to follow God's Word again—but they would be soon, after the next troubles came.

The Philistines got an idea. "Let's stop being afraid of this Ark of the Covenant! That's silly! Let's just go and take it away from the Israelites!" and they did! Everyone was shocked and very displeased. That had never happened before.

Wasn't God strong enough to stop such a terrible thing from happening? Yes, He was, and it would be returned later on—after both the Philistines and the Israelites had learned a few things.

From the time the Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant terrible troubles began for them. In all their cities around people were getting terribly sick and having lots of painful afflictions, and there were so many mice it was very disturbing.

Every place they brought the Ark of the Covenant it seemed to bring with it the punishment of God for being the ungodly people that they were, and for taking the Ark of the Covenant. God needed to show them that He was real and alive and could do amazing things.

One time the Philistines put the Ark of the Covenant in the same room where there was a big statue-idol. They didn't worship or love God and had this statue that they chose to worship instead. It was pretty silly, and

angered God very much. He felt perhaps a bit like you might if you had invented and created a very complicated machine that could do all sorts of great things, and instead of people complimenting you on the good job and asking you how to operate it properly, they ignored you and started saying the materials that the machine was made of was what had created it. You wouldn't be too pleased and you'd think those people weren't very smart at all.

So these unkind and ungodly people had this statue for years and it looked strong and big. But not strong enough when compared to even a tiny little bit of God's spirit. When that Ark of the Covenant was placed near it something shocking happened that made them feel nearly the same as the Israelites had felt when the Philistines took away their Ark of the Covenant.



The big and strong rock statue fell over and broke, without anyone but God doing it. He showed them who really was to be worshiped. It looked as if even the stone

idol fell on its face and bowed down before the Lord. And this happened not just once, but twice!

After it fell the first time, they propped it back up again. However, when it fell down in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant the second time, it broke. It would have been good if the Philistines had learned from that, and changed and began worshiping, following and obeying the true and all-powerful God.

If they, as bad as they had been, had humbled themselves in prayer to the God of Heaven and said they were sorry and wanted to learn His ways, things would have been so much better for them.

If they would have gotten rid of their false gods and ugly practices and instead said to the Israelites, "Your God is the true God and the best, teach us about Him", and if the Israelites had been the good examples that they should have been, they could have helped to change things for the better. But since that didn't happen things got real unpleasant and hard for anyone who kept going their own, ungodly and proud ways.

Samuel the prophet, who was then a grown man and the new judge, came to talk with the people and tell them that the way to make things right again and to not have these troublesome folks bothering them was to get back to doing things God's way.

Samuel said to the people of Israel, "If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, and serve Him only, He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

Everyone really listened and decided that they had had enough bad consequences for doing things the disobedient way. They chose to follow and love and obey God, and wanted to be able to get His blessings and protection. Samuel prayed and so did everyone else, and God showed His love and power to them and answered their prayers for help and relief from the troubles that were going on.

The Philistines had enough of their own problems that came when they took the Ark of the Covenant, and so they decided to return it. Then, after Samuel and the Israelites had prayed, God sent a powerful thunder display to help chase away the Philistines. God then did the miracles it took to make the country pleasant again. During the time that Samuel was the prophet and judge there was peace and rest from those bothersome folks.

People decided they liked doing things God's way, and chose to love and obey and worship Him. Samuel travelled around to different areas to talk to people and pass on God's words and instruction. He prayed lots for everyone to keep making the right choices and for God to help, bless and protect them all.

That was one of his most important jobs and it had a wonderful effect. Prayer changed things for the better. It was the key to Samuel's success in helping people go God's way, and to keep them following God's word.

Samuel didn't just read the words of the Lord, nor did he just tell them to others, but he lived them and showed by example what the right thing to do was. Living God's Word is just as important as reading or studying it, because if you can't put it into practice then it doesn't do you or others any good.



So when Samuel showed an example to the people of what it meant to pray and to follow the Words of God it made an impression and

people began to change, one step at a time, doing what Samuel showed them as an example.

He lived what God said to do. And when there were people that weren't going in the way they should he didn't try to work it out in his own might or try to push people to go this way or that way. He started with the first step which is prayer, because prayer can change things in ways that is beyond the help of people.

Prayer works the miracles that are needed. When he prayed, then people started to change from the heart, and that is where the change was needed.

Their hearts needed to follow God, and they needed to get to know God's ways and to see why it was best to do things His way.

When they did and things improved, the people saw that it was really the best thing to do. When things got worse when they only did whatever came into their minds, it taught them it would have been better to do as Samuel said—to pray and love and follow God's Words.

Samuel and Saul

In the time when judges, like Samuel, were the only rulers of the people of Israel it was like God was the king. Other countries and nations had kings ruling over them, but the Israelites didn't. These judges would pass on God's Words and instructions to the people and remind them of God's ways.

It was the way that God wanted it to be. He wanted humble rulers to help the people; rulers that wouldn't try to take control of things themselves and lead people in their own ways and with their own ideas, instead of God's.

Samuel was a faithful judge and prophet and heard clearly from God. People would go to him to find out things that they needed to know—things that only God knew. After many years however, of being instructed and taught by Samuel to do things God's way, the people wanted something different, they wanted a change.

They liked Samuel, but they felt that they couldn't just do as they wanted, anymore. Samuel was helping them to be obedient to God's Words, and after the country had been peaceful for awhile, because of the good choices they'd made because of following God's

ideas, then the people started to forget what it was like when things were real difficult before. They then seemed to have the time to start complaining.

"We want to be like the other countries! Everyone else has a king, and we want one too—instead of a judge or prophet instructing us!" people began to say.

It's a shame that it takes things getting real difficult, for people to want to stay close to God and to obey His Words. Isn't it odd that when things are going well that it is the easiest time to start being discontent and complaining and starting to think you can do whatever you want without there being consequences?

When things are going pretty well, and you feel rather comfortable, it's easy to then start focusing on new things that you wish you had and begin to look around and see what others have that you don't.

When things are real hard, you are thankful for any bit of peace and good that comes your way, but when things are going smoothly and you have what you need, it's sad that people then use their time to think up new things to complain about.



So people at that time were wishing for a king to rule over them. God told Samuel it was not because they didn't like Samuel, but because they were starting to turn away from God and wanted to be ruled by a person instead of God alone.

God told Samuel to warn the people and explain what would happen if they had a king. The king could do whatever he wanted. He could take the best things; make everyone work real hard for him; make them give him a lot of their food and animals—and they would have to obey the king if they didn't want him to be mad at them. Even though Samuel warned the people of all these things, they said it didn't matter; a king is what they wanted.

When someone is only thinking about the one thing that they want, it's not a good way to make a wise choice. To know what would actually be the best in the end, and to find out what would truly make them happy, someone needs to stop thinking for a moment about what they want and to instead think about the consequences of getting what they want.

They should ask questions like, "How will this affect me later on? Is it something I actually need? Is it even good for me? I know I really want it now, but will I regret it later?" And most of all, people need to talk with Me, Jesus, about it, in order to get the best advice.

If there is something that you are really wanting and it seems that it wouldn't be the best to get it or to have it right then, what can you do? You can pray for you to instead begin to want something else that would make you happier in the end. You can think for a minute what the true need or problem is that is making you want something. Maybe there is a better way to fill that need or wish.

The people of Israel didn't take those steps, but when Samuel passed on *God's Words* to them, telling them what would happen and how they would regret the decision later on, they just kept on saying that they still wanted a king.

Samuel talked with *God* about it and *God* said to go ahead and let a king rule over them then. *God*, who knew this would happen, already had someone in mind and would tell Samuel who it was.

One day, *God* told Samuel that the man who was to be the first king would be coming to see him the next day, and to have the cooks prepare a special portion of the meal for him to eat with this man.

Samuel obeyed and gave the instructions to those who would be getting everything ready. The next day, two men came to Samuel asking where the prophet lived, as they had a problem.

Saul was the name of one of the men, and he was travelling with a servant of his father trying to find their missing donkeys. They'd been gone for quite a while looking here and there all over the place and still hadn't found them. Saul suggested that they just go home, as instead of worrying about the donkeys their father would start to think that they were lost now too!



The servant then got an idea, "I heard about a prophet that lives around here. Why don't we go and ask him to tell us where the donkeys are. God could tell him that for sure."

And so they went looking for Samuel, and the women who were drawing water told them just where to find him.

When Samuel saw Saul approaching, God told him, "This is the man I told you about. He's the one that is to be the king."

Samuel surprised Saul by inviting him to come and eat with him that day, and then told him two more amazing things. Samuel said, "And don't worry about the

donkeys, they've already been found." He said then to Saul, "You are the one that everyone has been wanting and asking for."

Even though Saul was tall and good-looking, strong and able to do things well, he was also humble. He didn't think proudly about himself. He didn't think of himself as anything particularly special or important at all.

"What do you mean?" Saul said. "I'm nothing great. I'm from the smallest tribe of Israel, and there is nothing exceptional about my family either."

But he would find out soon what Samuel meant.

Saul was invited to sit in the best place in the dinner area where about 30 other people were having a special meal, and Samuel called the cook and said to bring the specially saved food that he had asked to be set aside for a certain guest—before Samuel even met Saul.



God knows what's going to happen to people, and He knows what will work out best. If you stop to listen to Me, Jesus, today and get My thoughts and advice on

problems that come your way, and hear what I want to say about things that haven't even happened yet, things will go so much better for you.

What would have happened if Samuel hadn't been listening to God that day when he was told that the person who was to be the king was coming, and to prepare for it? Even if God had it all set up, and had Saul on his way to meet Samuel, if Samuel had been so busy trying to work things out on his own that he didn't have time to stop and pray and listen to God, he might have missed the whole plan.

Samuel could have felt very stressed and under pressure and instead of praying and trusting God to work things out, he could have frantically tried to come up with solutions. "I need to find a king! Who should it be? There are so very many people to choose from! How will I know who's the best one? There's no time to lose! Maybe I should just go on a long journey around the country and start searching!"

If Samuel had made the wrong choice to do that, he wouldn't have been at home at that time when Saul arrived. He wouldn't have heard God telling him that the solution, the man, was already on his way there! God was bringing the king to him, right at that moment. He just had to wait patiently for one more day.

I work in your life to bring different situations and solutions your way, and have good ideas how you can cope with the problems and difficulties. If you stay calm and pray for My plans to be shown to you, and you listen to what I want to tell you, it will save you so much time and effort.

Samuel had learned the best way to help people was to pray for them, and hear from God and put His words into action. So as he followed what God showed him step by step he saw things were working out with the new job of finding a king.

So after the special meal Samuel invited Saul to stay at his house, and on the flat rooftop they sat and talked for a long while. Samuel got to see what kind of a man he was. He could tell that Saul was the right one for the job—he was humble and meek, and his heart was right with the Lord. If he stayed that way, he would be a good king. He also had the skills and abilities to face the troubles that would come again from the Philistines and their harmful, selfish and ungodly ways.

In the morning, Saul and his servant began the journey home and Samuel walked with them for awhile. Samuel asked if the servant could go on ahead, as he had something that only Saul was to hear. When they were alone then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on Saul's head and said, "The Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over His inheritance."

The oil in a way represented the power of God giving him the strength and faith and ability to do the new job he was to do. He wasn't the king yet, and no one knew about their conversation and the fact that God had called and chosen him to be the king, but getting God's special power from above was the first step in starting a new and important job.

King Saul

When you have a new big job that you are about to do, that God is calling you to do, it helps to have something that confirms to you that it's God's will for you to do it.

If you know it's going to be a tough job and it will require effort and perseverance to stick to it and complete it, sometimes a special sign from God can be a great encouragement.

After Samuel had spent that time with Saul explaining things to him and after he'd anointed Saul with special oil, demonstrating that he would receive God's help for the job, Samuel then told Saul what was going to happen next.

God told Samuel some specific details of people Saul would encounter on his trip back home—what they would say, and what Saul was to do. Samuel said to Saul that when he saw each of these things happening, just like God showed him they would, that this was to be a sign to Saul that he was to be the new king.

Samuel said that Saul would meet three men, each bringing something—goats, bread and wine. The men

would offer Saul and his servant two loaves of bread that they were to accept.

Samuel said that Saul would also encounter a team of prophets with four different types of musical instruments—a psaltery, a tabret, a pipe, and a harp, and Saul would receive a prophecy then too, when he met them.

Samuel also said that they would meet some people who would explain to them that the donkeys had been found and that Saul's father was indeed missing his son and would be very happy to have him return.



After Saul listened to all these things that Samuel prophesied would happen on their journey home, he said goodbye to Samuel.

As Saul turned to walk down the path, God changed him on the inside! God's Spirit was on Saul and the Bible says that God gave him another heart—a heart and spirit filled with new feelings, new ideas, and new strength!

As Saul and his servant walked on, one-by-one each thing that Samuel said would happen, did happen! It was a clear sign to Saul that God was the one who was calling him to be the king.

When they met up with the prophets who were making music with the very types of instruments that Samuel told them they would have, Saul then felt the power of God on him, and he began to prophesy too!

It was the first time that had ever happened to him. People, who knew him from before, saw and heard him prophesying, and were very surprised. "Is he one of the prophets?" they were saying.

Just because you have "always done things a certain way" or have "never done that before" or you think you aren't talented or skilled in a certain thing, doesn't mean you will always be that way!

God can change anyone anytime and help them be whatever is needed to match the job they need to do— if it's His will. This was a situation where that happened.

To be the king required a much larger boost of power from Heaven than it took for Saul to just care for animals and do the work on the land. He needed new wisdom and inspiration and help. He would have to lead the people in wise ways and make good decisions that would affect the whole country.

When someone is just living and working with their family, the things they do will affect them and their family. But when someone is looked up to and depended on to lead many others it's a very big job and responsibility that affects many people.

God was still the one in charge, and if the king or ruler remembered that, and never made decisions without talking with God about it and making sure to say and do whatever God knew was best, then things would go well. But if not, then things would get difficult.

God, Samuel and Saul were the only ones that knew about Saul being chosen to be the king at that time. No one else knew then, and it wasn't just announced either. It was to be told to everyone at a special time and in a special way.

When the time came, Samuel called everyone together and said God would give them a king. First, God showed them that the king would be from the tribe of Benjamin.

Next, that it was from the family that Kish, Saul's father, was from. Then God showed them all that it was Saul, Kish's son, who was to be the king.



When it was announced that Saul was to be the one, he was nowhere to be seen! People were looking around for him and didn't know where he was. Samuel prayed and God said that Saul was hiding by the stuff.

Sure enough, there he was. When Saul stood up and everyone got to see who their new king was, they saw that he was very tall. He was taller than everyone else; head-and-shoulders above everybody.

"God save the king!" the people shouted.

A team of men were glad he was their king and when everyone else went home, the team of men travelled home with Saul to help him.

Some people that normally chose to not follow God's ways grumbled and weren't too sure about Saul being the ruler. It seemed there really wasn't any way to please the type of people who only wanted to do the wrong things and kept choosing to go in the opposite direction that God was leading in.

At first they wanted things to be different and not have a prophet and judge showing them God's ways, and to have a king instead. Then when they got the king, who was God's choice at that time and was someone who wanted to follow in God's ways when he started out, those grumblers didn't like that either.

When people are set on doing things their own ungodly ways, no matter what you do to try to help them

and to please them, you'll never make them really happy. They will never be content until they put their will on God's side.



Until then, things will just get worse and be very difficult for them. God's ways will always seem contrary to what the troublemakers want, because they are choosing to walk the wrong way. Things just won't seem right enough to them—until they choose to do what is truly right and learn to believe and trust in God.

But no matter what any of them felt at that time, Saul was their new king. And later on when they saw some of his good choices and the ways he was helping the country, they learned to accept him as the king.

A Thundery Demonstration

God's first choice for the Israelites was for them to follow in His ways and listen to the prophets and judges He gave them, and make good choices.

God wanted the people to do things according to His instructions because they loved Him and wanted to please Him. But since they were insisting on having a king, then Saul was the best man around for that job, right then.

Saul wasn't perfect and wouldn't always make the right choices—but no one does all the time. But at that point in time Saul was who God wanted to be the king. It was the second best choice in the situation.

Later on, when they saw that Saul had God's power helping him and that he had made some wise decisions and helped to protect the country when troubles started up, people started to accept his leadership fully. Samuel was still around and would help to give God's words and instructions at different times.

King Saul needed to listen to Samuel and obey what God said. Just because he was the king didn't mean that he knew everything and could just do whatever he alone thought was best. These people belonged to God, and Saul needed to let God be the main one leading them.

When the prophet Samuel told him some instruction from the Lord, Saul, just like everyone else, would need to obey what God said. Everyone needed to know that God was still around, and in charge, and it was very important that they all follow Him respectfully.

After Saul had been king for a short while, Samuel gave an important message and lesson talk. He gave instructions to everyone, because God wanted to get them going in the right direction. God wanted them to be off to a good start, so things could go well in the country.

Samuel reminded them that it would have been better for them not to have demanded to have a king, and that it wasn't what God knew would be best for them. He said that now that they had a king they needed to make sure to follow in God's ways and respect Him, if they wanted things to go well.



The people felt sorry that they had insisted on their own ways. Sometimes when you feel you want something, but it's not good for you to have it, then when you get to have it, your heart feels a bit sad. You thought it was something that would make things better, but then there is this emptiness in your heart instead; a bad feeling that makes you wish you had never pushed to get your way.

Sometimes people pray for things they wish they had, but I, Jesus, know what will really be best. If people love Me and trust in My loving care, then when the answer to some prayers is "no" or "wait" they can praise Me anyway, trusting that I'm only going to allow what is truly best for them. But sometimes people are so focused on what they want that they think it is the only thing that will make the situation better.

When they refuse to look up to Me with faith, putting their trust in Me, the only way I can get them to not be so focused on their own plans, but to trust in My wise planning and care is to give them what they want.

Then they see that it wasn't all they'd hoped for. They wish they hadn't gotten it, but it's too late to rewind and make the right choice to not be so demanding and insistent, but to pray in faith and then to rest and let Me do what I know is best, and deny them what isn't for their good.

So now they had a king and when Samuel was talking to them on this day they were feeling bad for pushing their own way. But God, through Samuel, encouraged them that if they made the choices to do things God's way and to follow Him, then things would be alright.

Samuel then called on God to do a miracle to demonstrate the power of God and to show the people that He was around and still in charge.



It was a bright sunny day, and no clouds were in the sky. Samuel said he would pray for thunder and rain to come right then. And it did! Right then there was a very big thunder storm and pouring rain!

Everyone believed that the best thing to do was to obey and follow God. They were reminded that He was right there with them and knew just what was going on. With God's almighty hand he could do anything He wanted to, in an instant! God was to be loved, and respected and obeyed. The people saw that clearly on that day!



Samuel
loved the
people and
wanted things
to go well for
them, and he
knew that if
they respected
and did things
God's way
things could go

well for them. Samuel promised that he'd always be faithful to pray for them. He knew prayer was the best thing he could do.

A Good Heart

If I see that a person loves me with all their heart, that is the most beautiful thing to Me. I love those that love Me. I'm near to those that are near to Me.

It doesn't matter how many mistakes you make or what you look like, if you love Me with your heart, your mind, and your soul, and you love My words, then to Me you are the most beautiful or handsome person you could be.

God loved King Saul and wanted him to be close to him. But it was hard for Saul to respect and put God and His will above what the people were saying and pressuring him to do. He wanted to be well thought of and respected.

However, in this world where you now live, that just doesn't work. Either, I will be first in your life and you will choose to please Me most of all, or you will try to please others and give their ideas preference above Mine. It can be real tough at times to make those choices to obey what I say to do, when others aren't supportive of your decisions and are trying to get to you to do something different.

Saul was having a hard time. He was trying to please both God and the people. He was trying to do a good

job, but when there was a choice to do what Samuel the Prophet told him that God wanted him to do, or to do what people were pressuring him to do, then he chose to please the people.

When he started off being the king, he wasn't very confident in himself and not everyone was pleased that he was the king. So, to try to make people glad to have him as their king, he sometimes would do what they wanted, even when God, through Samuel, said to do something else. He obeyed part of the way, but not all the way. However, part-way disobedience is still disobedience and doesn't bring the full blessing.

It's like someone telling the police who stopped them for driving too fast, "But I was driving on the correct side of the road, and I even had my seatbelt on!" Well, that's good, but it wouldn't be good enough and could cause a bad accident if they were still going faster than the speed limit. Full obedience to God brings full blessings.

Saul needed faith—faith to not let the stress of the difficult situations that the people were in, to affect him to the point that he just made sudden decisions and quickly did whatever seemed good at the time. He needed faith that God was in control and would work things out for them.

If he listened to God's instructions and followed through on them, no matter what was going on around him, things would be much better than if he just did what seemed good at the time. He needed faith that God would let him continue to be the king if he followed and obeyed God's words, rather than worrying that the people wouldn't want him to be the king if he didn't do what they wanted him to do.

Because Saul chose to listen and do what the people said he should, rather than staying true to God's words, this made him unable to be the kind of king God needed him to be. At first he started off in humility and was much more obedient to God's ways and His instructions. However, later he began to listen more to the words of the people and chose to do what he thought would make them like him better, instead of doing what God said to do.

One sad night God talked to Samuel about it. Samuel was a man who put God's Words and his closeness with God above being liked by people on Earth. He spoke the truth and passed on God's Words no matter how difficult it was. Samuel knew and realised that he wasn't the one in charge, but was as a servant, doing things the way God wanted them done. He was to be a voice to say what God wanted the people to hear.

The situations that people got themselves into weren't easy, and the solutions weren't easy. So even if

some of God's Words and counsel was hard to receive, to tell people about, and to do, putting God's Words into action was a lot easier than experiencing the problems that would come to those who chose the proud way of the world around them.

God told Samuel that a new king would need to replace Saul. It was clear that Saul was no longer a suitable king as he wasn't making the right choices. Samuel cried for a long while and his heart was aching with sorrow as he talked with God about the situation. God was sad that Saul wasn't following Him, and Samuel felt the sadness of God's heart too.

It's disappointing when someone could do something great for God, but then miss their chance because of pride. Saul was proud and thought he could do a better job than doing what God said to do. He was proud when things went well and took the credit to himself. He thought it must be because he was a great guy.



Saul let pride and other sins into his heart and this made him lose the anointing for being a good king and ruling well for a long time. And his children and

grand-children would not have the chance to become kings after him either, due to his wrong example.

Getting proud thoughts when something goes well for you, instead of thanking Me for helping you, will make it go poorly for you the next time. It's like if a hose that sprayed out water began to think that it was amazing on its own. What if the hose broke away from the tap and said, "Look what a great job I did watering the garden! I don't need to be hooked up to that tap all the time. It stops me from moving too freely and going to all the places I'd like to go!"?

Well, that would be the last time water came out of it, right? The gardener needs the hose to help spray the water all over, but it will only work if it's hooked up to the tap, and water can pour through it.

That's a little example of what it was like for Saul. When he knew he couldn't do anything without God helping him, then he was the right one for the job. However, when he allowed pride and disobedience to God into his life then he couldn't help the people in the ways God needed him to.

Samuel travelled to pass on a message from God to Saul, and to let him know that he'd gotten too off track. Samuel explained, "When you were humble and didn't think greatly of yourself, that is when God called you to do a very important job. However, because you kept

choosing to do things your own way and have been disobedient to His instructions, God will choose someone else to be the king instead.”

Saul was very sorry then for his disobediences and wanted to make things right with God again. He and Samuel had some time to pray together. Saul was still the king for quite a while longer, until it was the right time for a new king to take the throne. God needed to prepare someone else for the job, and that would take time.

However, those next years of being a king were very hard, as his heart was sad, and he no longer had God's special power helping him. He'd missed being what he could have been.

There was one more important job that God had for Saul however, and unbeknownst to him, he was going to help play a part in training the new king a little while later. God had things all planned out.



God told Samuel where to go to find the person who was to be the new king—to Bethlehem. On the hillsides of Bethlehem was a

humble shepherd boy. A young person who loved God and spent lots of time talking with Him and listening to His thoughts, would make a good new king.

Samuel was instructed by God just where to go and what to do. He held a feast and time of worship there in Bethlehem, and a man called Jesse and his family were invited. Before they ate the food, Samuel had a job to do. He held in his hands a horn of oil and was to anoint, or pour it on the head of the one that was to be the new king. God told him that one of Jesse's sons was to be the king, but exactly who it was to be, wasn't told Samuel yet.



"Have your sons come stand before me, one-by-one and I'll see which one God wants me to anoint," Samuel told Jesse. "We'll have the feast after I do that."

Starting with the oldest, they passed in front of Samuel. The oldest was good looking, tall and strong, and it reminded Samuel of Saul who was tall, and God had chosen him.

But this time God had someone completely different in mind.

"No, he's not the one. I look on the heart, not on the outward appearance," God told Samuel.

Samuel motioned for the next son to come, and the next, and the next, until there were none left. Samuel was puzzled. He was to anoint one of Jesse's sons, but when they stood in front of him, God said none of them were to be the one.

"Do you have any other sons?" Samuel asked.

"Yes, the youngest, David. He's watching the sheep on the hill," Jesse said.

"Please call him! We won't eat until he comes here," Samuel asked.

Young and energetic David came as fast as he could, and as soon as Samuel saw him, God said that he was the one to be the new king.

David knelt down and Samuel poured the special oil on his head, and from that moment on God's Spirit came on him. Eventually he would be the king; later on when the time was right. A person with a good heart who loves God is better than the tallest, strongest, smartest or most good-looking person around.

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