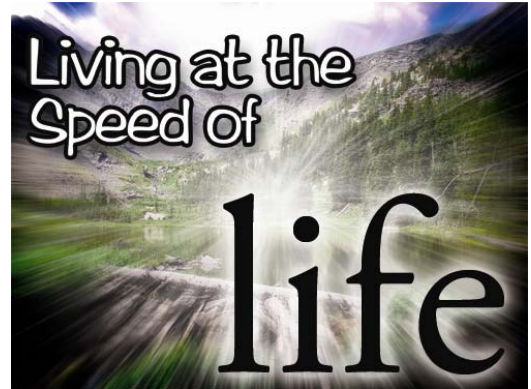


# RTM

reaching/teaching/ministering curriculum



April 26, 2009  
A Step Ahead of God  
1 Samuel 10:5-9; 13:5-14

## MINISTERING HELPS

### Group Prayer

Ask members to name folks they know who work each Sunday with preschoolers, children, or our youth. List these names on the board and pray for them today. Also, remind group members that we are looking for folks who will help teach our kids these next 12 months beginning in August. Pray that we will find all the leaders we need; and if your class has some volunteers, let Jeff Humphrey know in the church office.

### Stay Connected

Anyone in your group needing some ministry such as a lawn mowed or meal cooked because life has thrown them a tough moment? Why not organize a ministry moment to them to let them know they are loved by God and by your BFG!

## REACHING HELPS

One of the greatest reaching things we do at FBC Allen is Vacation Bible School. It takes a lot of volunteers to minister to nearly 1000 kids.

Right now we are signing folks up to help in VBS. VBS is one of the things we do where EVERYONE can do SOMETHING.

Challenge each person in your group to sign up today to help with teaching or some other need related to VBS at the VBS table in the Worship Center.

## TEACHING HELPS

Today, we start a new sermon series called LIVING AT THE SPEED OF LIFE. It will be a challenge for us to take a look at our fast paced lives to see if there are areas we are running ahead of God.

Today's BFG lesson takes a look at King Saul in the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. When he was anointed the first King of Israel, God was with him and wanted to do great things through him. But quickly, Saul began to run ahead of God and God had to look for someone else to do His work in a way that would honor Him before the people.

It never pays to run ahead of God. Let today's lesson challenge your group to examine ways they may be getting ahead of God.

# A Step Ahead of God

## 1 Samuel 10:5-9; 13:4-14

Unlike stories from Walt Disney, not every story in the Bible ends with “and they lived happily ever after.” King Saul’s story from the Old Testament is a case in point.

Saul’s story of becoming king may not be as well known to you. Here is a quick overview...

- The nation of Israel grows tired of being led by judges, and desires to be led by a king, as other nations are. (1 Samuel 8:4-7).
- God tells Samuel, the current judge to do what the people are asking for. (1 Samuel 8:21-22)
- Saul was looking for lost donkeys, but God was looking for Saul. Through some amazing events, Saul ends up spending time with Samuel, where Samuel reveals to Saul that he is to be the next King of Israel. (1 Samuel 9-10:1)
- As a confirmation of these things, Samuel goes into detail about some events that will transpire in the next seven days, all of them coming to pass just as Samuel says. Through these events, Saul is recognized as the king of all Israel.

Things moved quickly for Saul, and great power and the fellowship of the people were bestowed on Saul. Just as Peter didn’t walk on water very long because he took his eyes off Jesus who was enabling him, Saul didn’t last very long as king because he took his eyes off the God of Israel who had called and enabled such a quick and powerful kingly leadership for him.

The pace of Saul’s life went from very slow to very fast in just a week’s time. Saul got caught up in trying to keep up with the fast pace of things, and responding to it in his own understandings. Saul’s quick failure as king could have been avoided if he had practiced the truth found in Proverbs 3:5-8...

### Introduction...

It has been said that “kids grow up too fast these days.”

- What is the meaning behind this statement?
- What is the danger of let’s say a 13 year old having to make adult decisions?
- How could a parent help if their kid was willing to be helped when they have to make adult decisions?

In the same way kids can get into situations that they are not ready for; so can we as God’s children. Discuss how sometimes we are just like our kids in the areas of asking for help, taking advice, and thinking we know more than we really do about situations we face in life.

Today’s scripture tells us the story of King Saul in the Old Testament. In it we will see how he got to running ahead of God and the results. Let’s see if we can learn how NOT to make the same mistake.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.  
Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.  
Don’t be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil.  
Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones.*  
**Proverbs 3:5-8 (NLT)**

## 1. God Reveals What Saul Needs to Know and Do... (1 Samuel 10:5-9)

<sup>5</sup> “When you arrive at Gibeah of God, where the garrison of the Philistines is located, you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the place of worship. They will be playing a harp, a tambourine, a flute, and a lyre, and they will be prophesying. <sup>6</sup> At that time the Spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon you, and you will prophesy with them. You will be changed into a different person. <sup>7</sup> After these signs take place, do what must be done, for God is with you. <sup>8</sup> Then go down to Gilgal ahead of me. I will join you there to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. You must wait for seven days until I arrive and give you further instructions.” <sup>9</sup> As Saul turned and started to leave, God gave him a new heart, and all Samuel’s signs were fulfilled that day.

### 1 Samuel 10:5-9 (NLT)

As **Samuel** prepared to reveal God’s purposes to Saul, he first anointed him with **oil**. In the Old Testament anointing with oil symbolized the setting apart of a person or even an object for divine service ([Ex. 30:23-33](#)). It was also accompanied by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit ([1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 16:13](#)). When Samuel **poured oil on Saul’s head**, that act represented God’s approval of Saul as **leader** of His people.

In confirmation to both Saul and the people of his divine call and commission, Saul was told that he would experience three signs: (a) he would **meet two men near Rachel’s tomb at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin** and Ephraim, who would tell him of the whereabouts of the lost **donkeys**; (b) he would meet **three men** at the (oak) **tree of Tabor**, somewhere between Zelzah and Gibeah, who would give him **two loaves of bread**; and (c) he would **meet a procession of prophets descending from the high place at Gibeah**. Remarkably, he would join in with the prophets in their **prophesying** as **the Spirit** of God enabled him and he would **be changed into a different person**. This is frequently taken to mean that Saul was converted or spiritually regenerated. However, such language for spiritual renewal is foreign to the Old Testament, and Saul’s subsequent attitudes and behavior do not bear out that this was his experience ([16:14; 18:12; 28:15-16](#)). Actually the Spirit made the inexperienced and unlettered Saul able to assume kingly responsibilities in much the same way as the judges before him were blessed ([Judges 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14](#)).

## God Reveals What Saul Needs to Know and Do... (1 Samuel 10:5-9)

1. Using the commentary in the introduction, make sure folks know Saul’s story and how he found himself King of Israel.

2. Read 1 Samuel 10:5-9

3. What specific things did Samuel say would happen to Saul? What did Samuel say would be the result of all these things coming to pass in verse 6? (He would be changed into a different person because of the Holy Spirit)

4. Saul had Samuel to tell him what God wanted him to know and do. Today, how do we know what God wants us to know and do? (Bible) What are the ways God speaks the truth of the Bible to us? (personally reading it, Worship, BFG, Christian teachers and writers, ...) Is there a danger in taking everything you hear about the Bible as truth? (See Acts 17:11)

5. When we apply the truth of scripture to our lives, are we changed into a different person? How so?

6. How much of what God wants us to do is important? Is it possible to do everything God wants us to do? What should we do if we find ourselves in rebellion toward something God wants us to do?

*Remember, O Lord, your compassion and unfailing love, which you have shown from long ages past. Do not remember the rebellious sins of my youth. Remember me in the light of your unfailing love, for you are merciful, O Lord. The Lord is good and does what is right; he shows the proper path to those who go astray. He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them his way. The Lord leads with unfailing love and faithfulness all who keep his covenant and obey his demands. For the honor of your name, O Lord, forgive my many, many sins.*

*Psalms 25:6-11 (NLT)*

After **Saul** left **Samuel**, the promised **signs** came to pass. So amazed were the witnesses to Saul's dramatic and powerful change of character that they created a proverb which thereafter was quoted to describe a totally unexpected and unexplainable phenomenon: **Is Saul also among the prophets?** This does not suggest, of course, that Saul became part of the prophetic ministry led by Samuel, but only that he was able to exercise a prophetic gift, at least on this occasion, though never having received prophetic training. This was a remarkable and convincing sign of God's presence and power in Saul's life.

Further evidence that Saul did not actually become a prophet lies in the stem of the Hebrew verb here. **He joined in their prophesying**, means literally; "He acted like a prophet among them." That is, to all outward appearances he was a prophet because he was able to enter into their activities.<sup>1</sup>

An important part of the story to understand is found in verse 8...

*Then go down to Gilgal ahead of me. I will join you there to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. You must wait for seven days until I arrive and give you further instructions."*

**1 Samuel 10:8 (NLT)**

Saul listened and heard everything that was to happen, including what was told him in verse 8.

## **2. Saul gets ahead of God... (1 Samuel 13: 4-9)**

*All Israel heard the news that Saul had destroyed the Philistine garrison at Geba and that the Philistines now hated the Israelites more than ever. So the entire Israelite army was summoned to join Saul at Gilgal. The Philistines mustered a mighty army of 3,000 chariots, 6,000 charioteers, and as many warriors as the grains of sand on the seashore! They camped at Micmash east of Beth-aven. The men of Israel saw what a tight spot they were in; and because they were hard pressed by the enemy, they tried to hide in caves, thickets, rocks, holes, and cisterns. Some of them crossed the Jordan River and escaped into the land of Gad and Gilead.*

*Meanwhile, Saul stayed at Gilgal, and his men were trembling with fear. Saul waited there seven days for Samuel, as Samuel had instructed him earlier, but Samuel still didn't come. Saul realized that his troops were rapidly slipping away. So he demanded, "Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings!" And Saul sacrificed the burnt offering himself. **1 Samuel 13:4-9 (NLT)***

## **2. Saul gets ahead of God... (1 Samuel 13: 4-9)**

1. Read 1 Samuel 13:4-9.
2. Though Saul had great success building the "follow"ship of his nation, there was another nation that was provoked by Saul. Just how provoked were the Philistines?
3. What was the effect of all this military build up on the soldiers of Saul? When times are tough, how does that add pressure to leadership?
4. What emotions do you think Saul was going through as he waited for Samuel to show up?
5. Who does a good king represent and serve? (the people) Who does a prophet represent and serve? (God) If Saul had waited and followed the game plan, what would Saul have been showing the people about God? What did Saul not following the game plan say to the people about Saul and about God?
6. When are you most vulnerable in getting ahead of God? When we get ahead of God, what is the usual result? What does it say to those who know us when we wait? What does it say to those who know us when we take shortcuts with what we know God wants?
7. How does the following verse apply (or not) to Saul?

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones.*

**Proverbs 3:5-8 (NLT)**

<sup>1</sup> Bible Knowledge Commentary, by JOHN F. WALVOORD AND ROY B. ZUCK, Victor Books

Here are two commentaries on this part of the passage. The first is from the Bible Knowledge Commentary...

True to the elders' wishes (cf. [8:20](#)), Saul set about the task of defending Israel against foreign enemies. The apparent objective of the troop deployments described here was the removal of a Philistine administrative center at Geba in the Israelite heartland; the presence of this enemy outpost less than three miles from Israel's original capital would have constituted a severe threat to the early Israelite monarchy. Furthermore, since Geba was a city set aside for the Aaronic priesthood (cf. [Josh 21:7](#)), the return of this city to Israelite hands would have been a way of strengthening the worship of the Lord in Israel. The necessary first steps in this mission were assembling and deploying an armed force. Accordingly, "Saul chose three thousand men from Israel" (v. [2](#)) for the job, and divided them up into two groups.

Saul took command of the larger force, some "two thousand" men, and stationed them at Micmash (modern Mukhmas), about 4.5 miles northeast of the capital city of Gibeah. The location was strategic, since it was near a crucial pass on the Way to Ophrah, a road in Israel's central highlands that led to Geba. Saul's firstborn son Jonathan was given command of the remaining men, who were stationed "at Gibeah in Benjamin," Israel's capital at this time. Though others had volunteered for this military campaign, Saul chose not to use them and sent them "back to their homes."

Jonathan's forces attacked the Philistines at Geba (v. [3](#)) and, based on both Israelite and Philistine reactions, apparently met with considerable success. As a result of the assault, the Israelites had "become a stench to the Philistines," that is, had inflamed the passions of the Philistines to the point of retaliation (cf. [Gen 34:30](#); [Exod 5:21](#); [1 Sam 27:12](#); [2 Sam 10:6](#); [16:21](#)). As a result, they immediately "assembled to fight Israel" (v. [5](#)). The Israelites trumpeted news of Jonathan's attack "throughout the land" (v. [3](#)) and mustered a large force "at Gilgal" (v. [4](#)) in preparation for the expected Philistine response.

Though Israel anticipated a Philistine counterattack, they were totally unprepared for the magnitude of the Philistine reaction: "three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore" (v. [5](#)) were dispatched to Micmash, where they took possession of the site of Saul's original military camp. The Philistines' occupation of Saul's base appears to have been a tit-for-tat response to the Israelite occupation of their former center of operations at Geba. When the Israelites witnessed this overwhelming show of Philistine force, they understood "that their situation was critical" (v. [6](#)); troop defections (cf. [14:21](#)) and mass desertions quickly resulted. The deserters either hid (v. [6](#)) or left the Promised Land entirely, going east of the Jordan (v. [7](#)). Saul and the rest of the troops who did not leave "remained at Gilgal," where they were "quaking with fear" (v. [7](#)).

In accordance with the Lord's word (cf. [10:8](#)), Saul was in Gilgal, where he anxiously awaited the passage of the "seven days" (v. [8](#)) and the prophet Samuel's arrival. The king's timely obedience to Samuel's directive to go to Gilgal had likely saved his life since to have remained at Micmash would have meant certain defeat at the hand of the Philistines.

However, Saul's obedience was only partial; he had also been directed to wait until Samuel arrived and administrated over the prescribed sacrifices. Since sacrifices were normally offered up twice a day, in the early morning and at twilight (cf. [Num 28:1-6](#)), Samuel could have arrived at any time on the seventh day and still fulfilled his role in the process. Unfortunately Saul did not give Samuel an opportunity to do so but offered the "burnt offering" (v. [9](#); Hb. *'ōlâ*) himself. Before the king could offer

up the “fellowship offerings” (Hb. *šēlāmîm*), however, he was interrupted by Samuel’s arrival (v. [10](#)). Saul “went out to greet” (v. [10](#); lit., “to bless” ) the prophet.<sup>2</sup>

The second commentary comes from the Teacher’s Commentary....

Saul established a small standing army, posting his men at Gibeah and Micmash to defend against Philistine attacks. These cities, which lie just a little to the east of Jerusalem, show how deeply the Philistines had penetrated into Israel's territory. When Saul's son Jonathan attacked a Philistine outpost, this enemy assembled an overwhelming army that cut through Palestine to assemble near Gilgal, almost on the banks of the Jordan River! This invasion terrorized the Israelites, who forgot their recent victory. Saul called out his people to fight, but instead the men of Israel scattered, to hide in rocks and caves.

Earlier Samuel had predicted this situation, and had told Saul to wait at Gilgal seven days for Samuel to come and offer sacrifice. Saul had been told, "You must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do" ([1 Samuel 10:8](#)). So now Saul waited. And he watched as members of his army slipped away! Saul did not know what he could do. But as the seventh day slowly passed, Saul felt he could not wait any longer. Disobeying the word of God's spokesman Saul ordered a fire laid, and he himself, though not of priestly lineage, offered a burnt sacrifice to the Lord!

Saul had been effective in action. But he was unable to stand the pressure of waiting! How like so many of us. As long as there is something to do, we're all right. But when there are pressures, when we don't know what to do and we have to wait, we too are tempted to act foolishly.

The smoke from Saul's sacrifice was no sooner drifting up into the skies than Samuel appeared. Shocked, the old prophet confronted the disobedient king. "You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you," Samuel told him. "Now your kingdom will not endure" ([1 Samuel 13:13-14](#)).

Rather than waiting for a priest, Saul offered the sacrifice himself. This was against God's laws ([Deuteronomy 12:5-14](#)) and against the specific instructions of Samuel ([1Sa 10:8](#)). Under pressure from the approaching Philistines, he took matters into his own hands and disobeyed God. He was doing a good thing (offering a sacrifice to God before a crucial battle), but he did it in the wrong way. Like Saul, our true spiritual character is revealed under pressure. The methods we use to accomplish our goals are as important as the attainment of those goals.

—Life Application Bible Notes

The biblical passage makes one striking addition. It reports that when Samuel left Gilgal, and Saul counted the men who were with him, they numbered about 600. Is this number significant? Some years before Gideon had been called to deliver Israel from an enemy even more numerous. God gradually reduced his army, until only 300 remained. With the 300 God won total victory, and the enemy was routed. When the count was finally taken, why didn't Saul remember Gideon? Saul did not have the faith or courage to wait, for if he had might God have given him a victory twice as great as Gideon's?

We will never know Saul's thoughts as he learned the number of the men who had remained with him. But we do know now the nature of Saul's flaw. Under pressure Saul would be unable to trust God. Under pressure Saul would be unable to wait. Under pressure, Saul would refuse to obey.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> New American Commentary, By **ROBERT D. BERGEN**, Broadman and Holman Publishers

### 3. Saul pays the price for getting ahead of God... (1 Samuel 13:10-14)

*Just as Saul was finishing with the burnt offering, Samuel arrived. Saul went out to meet and welcome him, but Samuel said, "What is this you have done?" Saul replied, "I saw my men scattering from me, and you didn't arrive when you said you would, and the Philistines are at Micmash ready for battle. So I said, 'The Philistines are ready to march against us at Gilgal, and I haven't even asked for the Lord's help!' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering myself before you came." "How foolish!" Samuel exclaimed. "You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you. Had you kept it, the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom must end, for the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart. The Lord has already appointed him to be the leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command." **1 Samuel 13:10-14 (NLT)***

Samuel's curt response in the form of a question—"What have you done?" (v. [11](#); cf. [Gen 3:13](#))—makes clear that the prophet was not interested in social niceties at this time. Saul responded to the question defensively, blaming three other parties for his act of disobedience: his soldiers, who "were scattering"; Samuel, who "did not come at the set time"; and the Philistines, who "were assembling at Micmash" (v. [11](#)). He was "compelled" (lit., "forced himself") to perform the sacrifice because he feared that the Philistines would attack him before he had "sought the LORD's favor" (v. [12](#)). It is ironic—and symptomatic of Saul's spiritual dullness—that the king believed he could obtain the Lord's favor through an act of disobedience.

Brushing aside Saul's excuses, Samuel condemned the king's actions as those of a fool. No line of reasoning, however compelling, could ever justify disobedience to the Lord. Saul had disobeyed the Lord's "command" (v. [13](#)) and had to suffer the penalties. The employment of the term "command" (*mišwâ*), used elsewhere to refer to Torah mandates (cf. [Exod 24:12](#), etc.), places Samuel's words spoken in his role as a prophet of Yahweh on the same plane as the laws given through Moses at Sinai. This equating of the authority of Samuel's words with those of Moses, through the use of *mišwâ* is in keeping with the theology of the Former and Latter Prophets, which recognizes every word spoken through divine inspiration as being equally authoritative (cf. [Pss 19:8](#); [89:31](#); [112:1](#); [119:6](#), [10](#), [19](#), [60](#), [96](#), [115](#), [131](#), [166](#), [176](#)).

The prophet mentioned two consequences resulting from Saul's disobedience, one with long-range implications and one with immediate implications. First, the Lord voided plans to prosper the Saulide dynasty's future: "He would have established your dynasty ["kingdom"] for all time. But now your

### 3. Saul pays the price for getting ahead of God... (1 Samuel 13:10-14)

1. Read 1 Samuel 13:10-14
2. Who did Saul try to blame? (the army, Samuel, and the Philistines) What does this say about where Saul had his focus?
3. While what Samuel observed was Saul's actions, what was the thing God was observing? (His heart)
4. Jesus said the following...  
"If you love me, obey my commandments."  
**John 14:15 (NLT)**
  - God is saying here that the true way we show our love to God is by what?
  - How do you think Saul was measuring his love for God?
  - What are other wrong ways we try to show our love for God instead of through our obedience?
5. What was the price Saul paid for not truly loving God? Is there always a price to pay when we are disobedient and get ahead of God?

dynasty [“kingdom”] will not endure” (vv. [13–14](#)). As in the case of the dynastic promises made to David, there was a conditional dimension to the agreement that required obedience to the Lord for covenant fulfillment (cf. [1 Kgs 11:11](#)). Second and more immediately, “the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people” (v. [14](#)). The term translated as “leader” (Hb. *nāgîd*) is the same one used earlier to describe Saul’s present position as king (cf. [9:16](#); [10:1](#)). Unlike Saul, this new leader would be a man “after [the Lord’s] own heart,” a phrase that may refer (1) to the person’s profound commitment to the Lord or (2) to the fact that the Lord had selected that person.

The events included in the telling of this episode serve to create a tragic parallel between Saul and Adam (cf. [Gen 3](#)). Both men were the heads of their respective social institutions; both violated commands given them by the Lord; both expressed an unwillingness to take personal responsibility for their actions. Because of sin Adam lost the opportunity for eternal life in the garden; for the same cause Saul lost the opportunity for an enduring dynasty in the Promised Land. These parallels are not accidental but result from a consistent theological perspective that views loss of position and privilege as inevitable consequences of violating the Lord’s commandments.<sup>4</sup>

### Points for Application...

1. We tend to get out ahead of God when we “lean on our own understanding.” We can escape getting into trouble doing this if we...
  - Know what God wants as He has revealed it through the scriptures
  - Keep our focus on God and what He wants, not on the problems and our thoughts about what trouble may come next if we don’t do something.
2. God is looking at the heart that is behind the actions. Each of us will fall short, but the heart that blames others and tries to justify sinful behavior can not honor God. When we find ourselves falling short we need to admit it, confess it and ask God to help us be obedient.

Saul had plenty of excuses for his disobedience. But Samuel zeroed in on the real issue: “You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you.” Like Saul, we often gloss over our mistakes and sins, trying to justify and spiritualize our actions because of our “special” circumstances. Our excuses, however, are nothing more than disobedience. God knows our true motives. He forgives, restores, and blesses only when we are honest about our sins. By trying to hide his sins behind excuses, Saul lost his kingship ([1Sa 13:14](#)).

It is difficult to trust God when you feel your resources slipping away. When Saul felt that time was running out, he became impatient with God’s timing. In thinking that the ritual was all he needed, he substituted the ritual for faith in God. When faced with a difficult decision, don’t allow impatience to drive you to disobey God. When you know what God wants, follow his plan regardless of the consequences. God often uses delays to test our obedience and patience.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> New American Commentary

<sup>5</sup> Life Application Bible Notes