

Series: KING ME! God's People Get More than They Ask For

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...BUT EVERYONE ELSE HAS ONE!?!

1 Samuel 8

1. Has anyone ever seen one of these before [death mask]. Does anyone know who this is? Actually it's ME! At least, a version of me frozen in time at the age of 17. I made it in art class. You wear a rubber cap of your hair, smear Vaseline over your face, stick straws up your nose—and then have someone pour plaster over your face to make a mold of it. Hey, Abraham Lincoln had one made—why not me?

-The truth is that the idol we are **most** tempted to worship—is **this**—a gold-plated ME! We don't like to think that—but look at our world. Look at what people will **do** to get their share of worship—attention—admiration. Think of how many people get used and killed off every year—every **day**—so someone can gold-plate—**ME!**

-Anyone know what **forensics** is? Any CSI Miami or CSI New York fans. If you were to do the forensics on all the sadness and pain and need in our world—and follow it backwards—you find the place where **ME**—what I want—who I want to be—what I think—got erected in God's place and has created pain and death ever since.

- a. God's mission is to rescue us and rescue all creation from the worship of...the idol of **me!** That much is clear. What isn't **quite** as clear is **what** God has been doing to make things right ever since the original trainwreck. Most people who believe in God think, "Okay—He's **God**—He can do anything—it's been thousands of years—and things seem to be getting worse, not better. **What's up?**"
 - b. And my answer to that? **I don't know what's up!** But God is God—and if He's promised to restore everything—He'll do it!
2. Now, let me first say that even though the Bible was written by a bunch of authors over about 1500 years—it's one continuous story. It's a story of a God who absolutely **refuses** to just let people, creation and relationships disintegrate into chaos. Things get so bad at one point, God destroys everything—and starts over with Noah. But even then, things spiraled downward—until God chose one man—Abraham—and his descendants. He would bless him, multiply his descendants—and bless the nations through him.

*But the story of this nation is a rocky one. You think they get it—and they go off the rails. The whole nation is miraculously released from Egypt by the power of God—but, again—it's like a roller-coaster ride. Up, down, up, down—they can't seem to decide if they want to live as God's people or not—let alone bless the nations.

*Their history seems to hit this dark, evil place of idolatry, rape, violence and civil war. This comment, at the end of the Book of Judges, summarizes the chaos:

In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes. (Judges 21:25 NLT)

*But it gets worse. The whole temple system God had set up also goes off the rails—and in a single day, the high priest and his two sons die—and the **Ark of the Covenant**—representative of the Presence of God—gets captured by the enemy. This is **so** devastating that a priest's wife gives birth to a son—and he is named **Ichabod**—"the **Glory of God** has departed." The glory of God is what everyone wanted; it was the blessing and Presence of God. And now—all that was gone. It's not just twilight...it's **midnight**.

3. And **then?** God starts over with a woman named Hannah who was barren. Childless. Everyone thought that children represented the **blessing** of God—as a woman, having kids was your destiny. And if you **couldn't** have children...? In her agony of heart, Hannah called out to God—and God made her the mother of Samuel—a man in whom the Spirit lived. And for the first time in hundreds of years, Israel had a godly leader. he gave godly leadership to the nation of Israel for years.

-But Samuel got old. That happens. And he thought his sons should take his place—but unlike him, they were greedy and unjust. So, the leaders called a meeting with Samuel—and **they** wanted a king—you know, like everyone else!

They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have." But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights." (1 Samuel 8:6-9 TNIV)

- a. But despite Samuel's warnings of how oppressive and expensive kings could be—they **still** wanted one.

***We want to be like the nations around us. Our king will judge us and lead us into battle.* (1 Samuel 8:20 NLT)**

Interesting how they put it, isn't it? What you find out later is that another nation--the Ammonites—were threatening them—and the motivation behind wanting a king was **fear**!

-There's a not-so-subtle pressure that just about every parent faces. The show-down happens over the latest fad in clothes or toys—or, especially, cell-phones. The standard response to a **No!** from the parents is...."**But everyone else has one!!**" Interesting, isn't it, to hear that line from a nation who wants a king? Especially God didn't **want** them to be like all the other nations. The point of Israel's existence—and our existence, for that matter, is not to promote **sameness**—to blend in--but to make a **difference**.

- b. Now, here's what I find absolutely **fascinating**. God gives in to what **they** ask for. He honors the gift of free will—even though it's clear that they're rejecting **Him** as their king. And He doesn't ditch them! "**Fine—if THAT'S the way you're gonna be...!**"

-God never seems to violate our choices and force His ways—or reject us when we make poor choices. It's like His arms are big enough to wrap around all people and all things—and draw us into His greater plan. In this case, God takes **their** choice and ultimately uses this human idea of a kingdom to bring His Son to this planet as the **Son of David**. But—I'm getting ahead of myself!!

4. Samuel's goal—with God's help, is to find a king for Israel. For the first time, you hear about the king being the one **God Anoints**. Anointing was simply pouring oil over a person's head—indicating that God had chosen them. The first time you see people anointed like this is when Aaron is appointed as High Priest. Samuel doesn't realize it then—but he is **not** being replaced at God's command; He is stepping into what will be his greatest role ever; a **Kingmaker**. He doesn't get it—but in the middle of all his feelings of personal rejection, his anointing will ultimately culminated in **The Anointed One**—that is, the **Messiah; the Christ**.

-The first king Samuel anoints is the son of a wealthy influential man named Kish. And then this:

His son Saul was the most handsome man in Israel—head and shoulders taller than anyone else in the land. (1 Samuel 9:2 NLT)

Saul and Samuel meet in a very odd way. Saul is out looking for his Dad's wayward donkeys and comes to Samuel as a king of spiritual **lost and found** department. Saul not only find's Daddy's donkeys—he gets anointed king!

-As he anoints Saul, Samuel makes it clear that the **human king** of Israel—is second in command to God.

“I am doing this because the LORD has appointed you to be the ruler over Israel, his special possession.” (1 Samuel 10:1 NLT)

-So, God spoke and chose Saul, Samuel obeyed and anointed him, the Spirit came on his and gave him a new heart—and it was a done deal! Saul, with his good looks and size, **looked** like a king—and made a great military leader. He married a beautiful princess—fitted with tiny glass slippers, they built a castle--now featured in Disneyworld—and lived happily ever after! Well...not quite!

- a. Actually, Saul's story is one of the most tragic in the Bible. He **started** well—but like a lot of Israel's kings to follow—didn't end well.

-If you had to summarize **what** took him down, it seems initially to be Saul's impatience and fear. But at the core of that, it seems like he forgets that God is

first—and he is **second** in command. When push comes to shove, he does what he wants to do—instead of what God tells him to do. On one occasion, Samuel says these cutting words:

“...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 13:14 NLT)

- b. Like us, Saul didn’t understand that all he had been entrusted with belonged to God—and he wasn’t just free to flip God off when it seemed more convenient. Saul didn’t learn from this—and did the very same thing the **next** time he got in a tight situation.

Then the Lord said to Samuel, “I am sorry that I ever made Saul king, for he has not been loyal to me and has refused to obey my command.” Samuel was so deeply moved when he heard this that he cried out to the Lord all night. Early the next morning Samuel went to find Saul. Someone told him, “Saul went to the town of Carmel to set up a monument to himself...” (1 Samuel 15:10-12 NLT)

-Do you see what’s going on? Samuel’s up all night crying over Saul—and at that same time, Saul is busy building a monument to **himself!** Saul thinks he’s just **fine** because he sacrifices a whole bunch of animals to God. And Samuel confronts Saul on this:

“Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice...Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.”
(1 Samuel 15:22a, 23 NLT)

5. Samuel must’ve loved this guy—because we are told that he mourned and mourned over Saul—but never met with him again. Finally God said, “Okay—mop it up! Get your oil—it’s time to anoint the next king.

...Go to Bethlehem. Find a man named Jesse who lives there, for I have selected one of his sons to be MY KING” (1 Samuel 16:1 NLT)

-We now know, as strange as it may seem, that Saul’s replacement would come from a family of half-breeds! The great-grandmother had been a prostitute in Jericho, and the grandmother was a Moabite—a culture the Israelites had been **forbidden** from intermarrying with!

-In that culture, being the first-born was **everything**—and that’s who Samuel instinctively goes for! He sees Eliab, a fine strapping young man—and is about to say, **You de MAN!** But God whispers, “He **not de man!**”

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”
(1 Samuel 16:7 NLT)

-So Samuel burned down through 7 sons. Nope. Not you. Not you...or you. Uh,uh. Jesse finally hauls the runt of the litter in from the sheep pastures—smelling like...sheep dip! And **this** was the man after God’s own heart. David. And the same thing happened; Samuel anointed David—and the Spirit of God came powerfully on him—**from that day on**. And with David, God starts an unbelievable era of hope in the history of the world.

-Saul’s personality, from this point on, begins to disintegrate. He’s not just misguided or impetuous—he’s jealous—and mean. Filled with hatred. The downward spiral starts with a curious account:

Now the Spirit of the LORD had left Saul, and the LORD sent a tormenting spirit that filled him with depression and fear. (1 Samuel 16:14 NLT)

If you’ll remember, it was God sending his Spirit to Saul that changed his heart. When the Spirit left, there was **also** a profound change, and the vacuum literally drove him insane. Guess who came to cheer him up with music. David, the kid Samuel anointed as the next king!

- a. We’re going to talk more about David in the weeks to come, but what you see is the contrast between a king who really **gets** it—that the people are God’s not his—and that his obligation is to honor God in front of the people—and in front of the world.

-The short story is that the blessing of God follows David—this teenage shepherd with a good heart, and Saul can’t **stand** it. The final jab is a little ditty the teeny-boppers make up; “Saul has killed his thousands—and David his **tens** of thousands.” He decided that the only way to deal with David was to kill him. And **that** became his life’s ambition. Kill David—the one God chose over me! Think how twisted that is! And because of his jealousy and hatred, David lost everything and spent **years** just trying to stay alive.

- b. Saul’s end is unbelievably tragic. The night before he died, Saul sought out a witch to try to get help from Samuel and God. **Very** bizarre—but that’s how twisted minds think. And the next day, Saul was killed in battle—far from God.
- c. David was not nearly as impressive outwardly as Saul—and he made some terrible mistakes. But what you see about his life is that his heart was always responsive to God—even when he was publicly confronted and disciplined. Every king that followed would be compared to David with words like, “...but his heart was not fully devoted to God—like his ancestor, David.”

6. What amazes me when I read this story is how relentless God is in pursuing people. I mean, He’s not wishy-washy—when a guy like Saul was entrusted to lead **His**

people—and listen to **His** voice—and didn't—God rejected him. God didn't **nuke** him—take him out—but He did set him aside.

-And, as you read this story, you find out that God adapts to the people's desire for a human king—a rejection of Him. He doesn't get angry and blow things up—He anoints a king. And another king—and he starts this trajectory of a kingdom—and carries it through to Jesus—who brings **THE Kingdom!**

-And it's clear at this beginning point in the era of the kings--God **has** a mission—to restore everyone and everything to **the way things OUGHT to be!** Things looked really bad then. The last leader or judge of Israel was a prostitute loving guy named Samson who broke every vow he'd ever made to God. Things get so bad with the violence, the civil war, the corruption of the whole temple system—that a kid is named, in essence, **God-has-left-the-building!** Had He? Of **course** not! Because the One leading this mission is the infinitely patient One who created the universe!

-When Israel comes to the end of this era of the kings, they will find out that human kingdoms, human plans, have a short shelf-life—that the only Kingdom that lasts—and brings life and hope and renewal—is the One **God** builds. There is only **One true King**—all the others are stand-ins.

-And that's why when Jesus taught people to pray, He told them to say, **YOUR Kingdom come; YOUR will be done—on earth, as it is in Heaven.** As it turns out, God took what people thought was **their** plan—and laid the foundation for a Kingdom that will never end. And that Kingdom is the One Jesus inaugurated from the cross—and the empty grave. And it's **still going!** That's the one Jesus taught us to pray would come here. And it **will win**—and put an end to all the mess and sadness all the other kingdoms have created! That's what the end of the story says.

7. There are a **lot** of things we can learn from this era of history—way more than I could possibly even mention. But as I see it, there's both a message of warning—and a message of hope.

a. The first has to do with how seriously God takes rebellion. Rebellion, at the core, is about **me**. I want to do what **I want to do**—and when push comes to shove, not even God will stand in my way. The symbol of that in this story—is Saul, out building a monument to Himself—while Samuel grieves that this man he anointed king has made himself unusable to God. It's the **golden death mask. ME!**

-This first king, Saul, did what millions of others have repeated ever since. He rejected his role as the simply the stand-in for God. That he was to **listen** to God—and then lead **God's** people accordingly. And since he rejected that to build a monument to himself—God gave him what he wanted. To be left alone. And all he had was this **death mask!**

b. And this guy, Saul, personifies our struggle with obedience, doesn't he? We **want** to be people after God's own heart—with his smile on our lives. We don't have a problem with obeying God when it's something we already want, right?

Healing? Blessing? Me being important and noticed? Having my sins forgiven? Being protected when I'm in danger? ***I want that!***

-The crunch, for us, comes when what **God** asks of us conflicts with what **we** want—what seems, well, **normal** to us. The words of Samuel to Saul when he rebelled are chilling. **God is not primarily interested in your sacrifices; He wants our obedience.**

-We think, "**Obedience? OBEDIENCE?** That makes it sound like I'm just a little kid who doesn't know what the heck he's doing!" And...? How many of you know exactly what the next 24 hours of your life is going to hold? How many of you know exactly what the next hour in this world is going to bring? How many of you can see, with crystal clarity, everywhere God is working—and what He's up to? Well, **He** can.

-See, here's the deal. Our lives are not our own. God has a mission of grace, good news, hope and life for the world. See, God's goal for us is not that we become good moral people who get all we want—then die and go to Heaven. God is **relentless** in His Mission. To **accomplish** this mission—He needs people who will listen to His voice—and do what he wants—and not spend their lives trying to shine up the **ME** part of their lives. Who will hand their little kingdoms over to Him—instead of playing king?

-And when we do that? Man, God pours on the power—we become people after **His** heart—and the most powerful force in the Universe, the Holy Spirit, empowers what we do. But He does have a problem with people who think that what **they're** doing is more important than what **He's** doing. He will not facilitate our rebellion; He knows what He's building. Let's be clear. Based on this account; to know what **He** wants—and then choose to just do what **you** want—and throw Him a few sacrifices to appease Him is an act of rebellion.

- b. There's another warning here in this story. And it's a form of heart disease created by the ME mask. In the case of Saul—it started with jealousy—and then spread and evolved into envy, resentment, bitterness—and ultimately into hatred. We are warned all through the Bible—and by Jesus—that this stuff is **cancer!** It spreads—and it will kill you, ruin your mission, and create pain for everyone around you. Paul says, in Ephesians, that it gives a foothold to Satan in our lives. Listen to these words:

And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil....Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32 NLT)

-There's only one antidote to this stuff. You have to own it. See, sometimes we just excuse it; "I don't hate them—I'm just righteously indignant! God and I are **both** ticked at them!" Baloney. Man up—even if you're a woman. Own it!

Because you have to renounce your attitude as evil, worthless, dangerous and sinful—and to renounce it—you have to own it. If you play with it—it will grow a root system that will strangle your heart and destroy everything it touches!

-And then keep **ME**, the death mask out of the center of your life. Everyone will be happier!

- c. And the final message—and the **best** message is...*hope!* There have been times in my life that I would have labeled ***Ichabod!*** **God has LEFT the building!** **God and His glory are no where to be seen!** How many of you have ever heard a Follower of Jesus teach that the world is just going to hell in a handbasket—and we should just circle the wagons and wait for Jesus to rescue us faithful ones? I can't tell you how many times I've heard that!

-And the truth is that Jesus **IS** coming back for his own. That is **very** clear in the Bible. But Jesus' instructions are also clear. God is on a mission to rescue and renew **everything**. It all belongs to him—every mountain, ocean, whale, walrus, elephant, ant, deer, mouse—every river, stream—every tree, flower and blade of grass. And every person, no matter how rebellious and off-track there are—belongs to Him. And **He wants it ALL back!**

-Here's the deal. He's chosen us as His means for accomplishing that mission. Make no mistake—when Jesus returns, He'll complete the process—but until He does—**our** Mission—is **God's** Mission. **We** don't just carry a mission of Good News—that God is out to restore shalom through Jesus the Messiah; we **are** the Good News.

-And as bad as things may get—or seem—the word is not ***Ichabod***—it's **IMMANUEL!** God is with us—right smack in the middle of the mess. So...***Don't lose hope!***