

# TOOLS FOR PARENTS



## The Story of Saul, Part 2

### QUESTIONS FOR CUBS

#### NOTE TO PARENTS/TEACHERS:

*The goal of this questions-and-answers section is to initiate interaction between you and your kids. Please do not just read the questions and answers to your kids. These answers are given for you at an adult level to think about and to process. Once that is accomplished, you can then translate them into appropriate answers for your kids.*

#### LESSON

Stepping up to the challenge of doing God's will

#### KEY VERSE

**"Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" (Isa. 6:8)**

#### EAR CHECK (STORY COMPREHENSION)

Q: What does Odeda say King Saul is not acting like?

A: *He says Saul is not acting like a king*

Q: What happens to King Saul when he hears that Nahash wants to hurt and shame Israel?

A: *The Spirit of God comes upon King Saul and he begins to lead his people*

Q: What does Samuel say will happen if the people of Israel do not worship and serve God?

A: *God would punish King Saul and the people*

Q: Who does the elder present to King Saul?

A: *Danau*

Q: On the eve of going to battle with the Philistines, when Samuel does not come as soon as King Saul wants, what does he decide to do?

A: *King Saul decides to offer the sacrifice himself, something only a priest is allowed to do*

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#### HEART CHECK (SPIRITUAL APPLICATION)

**Q: I've heard that the Bible tells us to "die to ourselves." It tells us that we should be "transformed." Those don't really sound like anything I want. I want to be me; I just want to be a better me. I find that kind of talk to be scary and disturbing. What do those verses mean?**

A: Because we have a sin nature, because it is nearly in our DNA to want what we want no matter the cost, we are trapped. We are prisoners of sin, and we do not have the key. Fortunately, Christ offers us the key by grace through faith in Him, and He very much wants to save us from the prison of sin. That's the part we really need to understand. Christ does not want to make our prison a better place, to help us to be a little bit better than we are now. That's just not good enough.

He wants to set us free from sin and evil, to transform us into the people we were meant to be. And that is so far away from where we are now. We will never get there simply by being a little bit better than we are. We are caterpillars who can't imagine what it would be like to become a butterfly, but that's what God wants for us. If you could talk to a caterpillar, he would probably tell you he does not want to be a butterfly. They eat different things, they look different—they don't even crawl, they fly! How scary that must be! Most caterpillars desire to be better caterpillars. But we must trust that God knows better than we do what we can become and what it takes to become the person we need to be. If we choose to trust in Him and accept the key to our sinful prison, we will become what we've always wanted to be but can't begin to imagine.

**Q: It seems that every time I do something for God I get kind of proud and ruin the whole thing. It's like I can't help myself. What's going on?**

A: People have struggled with this issue since the beginning of time. When things go wrong, we blame God; when things go well, we tend to take the credit for ourselves. It's our sin nature again. Pastors, singers, and public speakers struggle with pride too. But when we look closely at the root of pride, it's actually a matter of focus. When we are entirely focused upon ourselves, we blame God when things go wrong because our plans are ruined. When things go well, we naturally believe these things happened because of our abilities and good decisions. On the other hand, when our focus is on God and things go wrong, we can trust that there is a purpose behind the pain. We know God is doing something important in our lives, leading us to pursue His will, to find out how He wants us to deal with it. And when things go well, we will draw closer to Him. With thankfulness and humility, we realize that we don't deserve these good blessings, but they were given to us anyway as a gift from a loving God. And He alone should receive the glory.

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### “I” CHECK (PERSONAL APPLICATION)

1. God provided clear instructions for Saul to follow. The Bible also says that God gave Saul power and strength to accomplish God’s will. But Saul lacked confidence in God, instead trusting in himself. Read the funny story in 1 Samuel 10:20-24. Samuel had already told Saul he would be king. But when it came time for him to be selected from all of the tribes, where was he? Hiding in the baggage! Can you believe that the people of Israel wanted a king so badly they didn’t think anything was unusual about their first king hiding in a bunch of suitcases, duffel bags, and briefcases? Why do you think Saul did that? Can you think of any Bible verses that encourage us that God will give us the strength to accomplish His will (See Ps. 46:1; Isa. 40:31; Isa. 41:10; and Phil. 4:13)?
2. Some people wonder how they can know for sure what God’s will is for their lives. In his book *The Mystery of God’s Will*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll give us some helpful guidelines for “reading God’s lips” when it comes to knowing His will. It is in an easy to remember acrostic:
  - a. *An accepting frame of mind.* You need to have a “can-do” spirit. To do this you should free yourself from distractions and spend time praying for God to show you what His will is for you. You need to be open to what He may teach you and be sensitive to what He might tell you.
  - b. *Biblical investigation.* God’s will is never contrary to God’s Word. Spend time researching what the Bible has to say about the issues you’re facing. Ask a parent, pastor, or teacher to help you find verses in the Bible that might apply. A concordance is a great Bible-study tool that can help you locate topics and where the verses can be found.

### DIRECTOR’S NOTES

King Saul had a good beginning. Despite overwhelming odds, he rallied the nation of Israel into battle. He was decisive, he was bold, and he led like a king should. After the victory, he even had the humility to give the credit to God and to pardon those who would have tried to bring him down. Though there were to be many battles in the future, Saul’s best days were at the beginning. Unfortunately, his first battle was going to be remembered as his greatest moment. To peak at the very beginning is the gnawing fear of every ambitious person.

It is curious how we tend to be afraid and humble and open to suggestion at the beginning, but then after some success, when God steps in and does the improbable or even the impossible, we begin to scoop up the credit by armloads for ourselves. This tendency alone should be proof of the darkness of the heart of man. One of Saul’s greatest problems, and he had many, was that he lacked humility. There is much confusion about the concept of humility in the world, but it’s even worse in Christian circles. We often tend to think that humility is an exercise in thinking nasty thoughts about ourselves. We feel that somehow it pleases God to think of ourselves as trash, or as scum, or as a worm. This is a tragedy—a theological tragedy. Humility is the condition we find ourselves in when we place God as the centre of our lives. When He is our

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guide, when He is the standard we pursue, and when we are willing to obey Him because He is the God of the universe, then we will be humble before Him. This definition could not be more opposed to thinking of ourselves as trash! The problem with us Christians isn't that we think too highly of ourselves; the problem is that we think of ourselves entirely too much in every way! Thinking too highly of ourselves is self-centred, and thinking too lowly of ourselves is equally self-centred (though much less pleasant), but both are equally the opposite of humility. Saul is not too different from any of us—some days he thought too highly of himself; some days he thought too lowly of himself. His problem (and ours) was he *simply thought too much about himself*.

The Bible has much to say about this condition of our heart. We are told to "die to ourselves," "to offer ourselves up as living sacrifices," the ancients used to call this "self-mortification." Doesn't sound like much fun does it? Not surprisingly, this kind of idea gets very little attention in our modern world. We are trained from our earliest days to think of ourselves as the centre of the universe. This is actually somewhat redundant considering the fact that our sin nature, which came with us when we were born, tells us we are the centre of the universe all of the time. The most difficult struggle many people have with Christianity is the seemingly harsh thought that *I will have to allow God to turn me into something else*. This makes me think along the lines of the science-fiction film from the 1950s, *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. In this fairly cheesy story, aliens come to Earth, and inside a big, green peapod kind of thing, they grow a duplicate of you. When you fall asleep, you die, and that other body becomes the new you. The new "you," however, is not the real you. It is something foreign, something alien. It is something other than you. That is our deepest fear.

Despite the fact that we clearly don't know how to live our own lives properly and we can't seem to stop making choices that work against us, causing pain for us and those around us, our greatest fear is that God wants to make us something different, something better than we are today. The foolishness of this fear embarrasses me. Christ came to save us from all kinds of things, not just from hell. He also came to save us from ourselves. And despite the fact that this is one of the greatest gifts He has to offer us, it's the one most of us don't want to have anything to do with. This is a tragedy of the worst order. I believe this is the reason why the lives of most Christians don't look any different from the lives of unbelievers. As a friend of mine often says, "We just have to get over our own bad selves." And that is something that King Saul never felt it necessary to do.

It is my deepest hope and prayer that the story of King Saul will shock our listeners into hating this kind of self-absorption. It's so common to us; it's like oxygen. It's all around us, and therefore we believe that's the way things should be. That is a lie from the pit of hell. Oh Lord, please save us from ourselves!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David B. Carl', is written in a cursive style.

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