

NOTES

SERIES TAKEAWAY

A champion generation isn't raised by accident. It's formed in a house, by an ear that listens, a mouth that tells the truth, and a hand that lets go at the right time.



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OPENING PRAYER

Father, thank you that you love us enough to speak truth into our lives. Give us humble hearts that are willing to hear you, courage to obey you completely, and grace to speak truth in love to others. As we open your Word, help us see Jesus more clearly and become people who reflect his character. Amen.

OPENING QUESTION_(OPTIONAL)

What's the funniest or most creative excuse you've heard someone use to explain why they didn't do what they were supposed to do?

**1 SAMUEL 15:10–35**

20 And Saul said to Samuel, “I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. I have gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction. 21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal.” 22 And Samuel said, “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.” 24 Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may bow before the Lord.” 26 And Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.” 27 As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. 28 And Samuel said to him, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbour of yours, who is better than you. 29 And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret.” 30 Then he said, “I have sinned; yet honour me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may bow before the Lord your God.” 31 So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul bowed before the Lord.

Supporting Text

Do you see a man skillful in his work?

He will stand before kings;

he will not stand before obscure men.

Proverbs 22:29 (ESV)

Read the passage together from the ESV, paying particular attention to verses 10–23 and 24–35. As you read, notice three things:

Saul's defence: He insists that he has obeyed God, even when the evidence says otherwise.

Samuel's confrontation: He refuses to let Saul's excuses obscure the seriousness of his disobedience.

Samuel's grief: He mourns Saul's failure, but God eventually calls him to stop mourning and move forward (16:1).

Key verse — 1 Samuel 15:22 (ESV):

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams."

**1. Obedience over offering: When religion becomes an excuse**

Saul's failure wasn't that he had completely ignored God's instructions. It was that he had selectively obeyed them. He spared Agag and kept the best of the livestock, then justified his actions by claiming the animals were intended for sacrifice to the Lord. Saul used religious language to make his disobedience sound spiritual. Samuel exposed the problem: God desires obedience, not religious activity used to cover rebellion.

We can fall into the same trap. We may serve in church, give generously, lead worship, or speak passionately about our faith while reserving certain areas of our lives from God's authority. We might even convince ourselves that the good things we do compensate for the things we refuse to surrender. But partial obedience is not wholehearted obedience. The question isn't simply whether we are doing good things for God, but whether we are willing to trust him enough to do what he asks.

The Gospel takes us deeper than a call to try harder. Jesus is the obedient Son who submitted to the Father, even to death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). We cannot earn God's acceptance through our performance, but having received his grace, we are called to surrender our whole lives to him. Obedience is not the price we pay to be loved by God; it is a response to the God who has loved us in Christ.

2. Courage over comfort: The love that tells the truth

Samuel's relationship with Saul makes this confrontation deeply personal. Samuel had anointed Saul as king and had walked alongside him as God's prophet. Yet when Saul disobeyed, Samuel did not soften God's message to preserve the relationship. He confronted the king with the truth, even when doing so meant announcing the loss of his kingdom.

Samuel's courage was not something he developed overnight. In 1 Samuel 3, when he was still a boy, he learned to deliver a difficult message to Eli. Over time, he became a leader who understood that faithfulness to God sometimes requires uncomfortable conversations. Proverbs 22:29 reminds us that skill and diligence can bring someone before kings. Samuel's influence, however, was not merely a product of competence; it was grounded in his faithfulness to God's word. **The character we develop in obscurity shapes the courage we need in public.**

MAIN REFLECTION POINTS

We, too, face moments when love requires us to speak. Parents must sometimes correct their children. Leaders must address behaviour that harms a team. Friends may need to challenge one another when someone is heading in the wrong direction. Christian confrontation is not about winning an argument, controlling someone, or proving that we are right. It is about seeking another person's good through truth spoken with humility, wisdom, and love. We cannot control how someone responds, but we are responsible for our own faithfulness.

3. Grief without despair: When God calls us to move forward

Samuel's grief over Saul is striking. He had invested in Saul's leadership, and he mourned the king's failure. Scripture does not present Samuel as emotionally detached or unaffected by disappointment. He could recognise the seriousness of Saul's sin and still grieve the loss of what might have been. Faithfulness does not require us to pretend that disappointment doesn't hurt.

Yet the story does not end with Samuel mourning. In 1 Samuel 16:1, God asks, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel?" He then tells Samuel to fill his horn with oil and go to Jesse's house, where he will identify Israel's next king. God does not dismiss Samuel's grief, but he refuses to let that grief become the end of Samuel's calling. There is still a future assignment, another leader to anoint, and another chapter in God's purposes.

This is an important lesson for anyone who has invested in a person, ministry, relationship, or dream that has not turned out as hoped. We can honour what was lost without allowing it to determine everything that comes next. The Gospel reminds us that failure is not the final word: Jesus has defeated sin and death, and God continues his work of redemption. We can bring our disappointments honestly to him, receive his grace, and trust him with what comes next.

The invitation is to grieve honestly, release what we cannot control, and remain available for what God asks of us next.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Partial obedience

Saul insisted that he had obeyed God, even though he had not followed God's instructions completely. Why is it sometimes easier to justify our disobedience than to admit it? What might wholehearted obedience look like in an ordinary area of life this week?

2. The best of the plunder

Samuel challenged Saul for keeping what God had told him to destroy. If we are honest, what are some things people might hold on to while trying to maintain the appearance of being spiritually obedient? Why can these things be difficult to surrender?

3. Obedience and the Gospel

If we are saved by grace rather than by our performance, why does obedience still matter? How does Jesus' obedience change our motivation to obey God?

4. Courageous confrontation

Samuel was willing to confront someone he had invested in and cared about. Why do we sometimes avoid difficult conversations with people we love or lead? What is the difference between confronting someone to prove a point and confronting them because we genuinely want their good?

5. Influence and character

Proverbs 22:29 highlights the value of skill and diligence. Samuel's life also demonstrates the importance of integrity and faithfulness. What habits or character qualities help someone become a trustworthy voice in the lives of others?

6. Grief and moving forward

Samuel mourned Saul, but God eventually called him to move forward. Have you ever struggled to move on from a disappointment, a failed relationship, a ministry setback, or an unfulfilled dream? What might it look like to grieve honestly while remaining open to God's next assignment?

7. From Saul to Jesus

Saul's story exposes the danger of selective obedience. Jesus, by contrast, remained faithful to the Father, even at great personal cost. How does Jesus' obedience offer us more than a moral example to imitate? How does his grace help us face our failures and begin again?

▲ ACTIVATION — SURRENDER, SPEAK, RELEASE

Invite everyone to take a few moments of quiet reflection.

There is no pressure to share anything publicly; the aim is to create space for an honest response to God.

SURRENDER — What needs to change?

Ask: What is the "best of the plunder" in my life right now?

Is there an area where you know what God is asking of you, but you have been negotiating, delaying, or finding ways to justify doing things your own way?

Take a moment to acknowledge it before God. Where necessary, confess your sin, receive his forgiveness, and identify one practical step of obedience.

SPEAK — Where is love calling me to be courageous?

Ask: Is there a conversation I have been avoiding because I am afraid of how someone might respond?

If you are responsible for leading, parenting, mentoring, or discipling someone, consider whether love requires you to speak truthfully. Ask God for wisdom, humility, and the right timing. If a conversation is needed, commit to approaching it with a desire to restore and strengthen rather than shame or control.

RELEASE — What do I need to entrust to God?

Ask: What disappointment have I been carrying that God may be asking me to release into his hands?

You may be grieving a relationship, a person you invested in, a ministry that did not flourish, or a dream that has not materialised. You do not need to minimise the pain or pretend you have everything resolved. Bring your grief to God and ask him to help you remain open to the future he is leading you into.

Close with this declaration:

Because of Jesus' grace, I do not need to hide my failures, defend my disobedience, or stay trapped in disappointment. I can surrender fully to God, speak truth with love, and trust him with what comes next.

▲ CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank you for loving us enough to confront the things that keep us from walking faithfully with you. Forgive us for the times we have offered you our religious activity while withholding our obedience. We surrender our whole lives to you again. Jesus, thank you for your perfect obedience to the Father and for the grace you have made available to us through the cross and resurrection. When we fail, help us come honestly before you rather than hide behind excuses. Form in us hearts that trust you enough to obey, even when obedience costs us something.

Holy Spirit, give us Samuel's courage to speak truth in love. Teach us to confront without condemning, to lead without controlling, and to care enough to have the conversations we would rather avoid. For those carrying grief over people, relationships, ministries, or dreams that have disappointed them, bring comfort and renewed hope. Help us honour what has been lost without becoming trapped in the past.

As you called Samuel to fill his horn with oil and move forward, help us remain available for your next assignment. Make us faithful in the unseen places, courageous in difficult moments, and hopeful about what you are still doing.

May our lives reflect the wholehearted obedience of Jesus, not as an attempt to earn your love, but as a response to the love we have already received.

In Jesus' name, Amen.