

(Title Slide)



**Why is it so hard for us to open our ears and really listen?
-- Why do we so often protect ourselves by moving to silence or violence?**

TR: Why does it seem that some people know . . .

 **DON'T**
 **PUSH**
 **MY**
 **BUTTONS!**

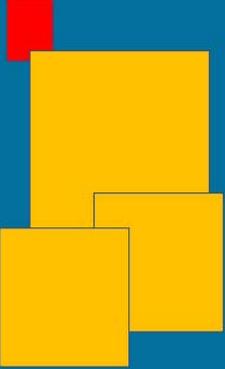
3

. . . exactly how to push our buttons.

-- Since it is true that in conflict situations we have the most control over ourselves . . .

-- . . . how can we rewire our buttons so that we move toward being biblical peacemakers?

TR: I think it may help to look into the mirror of God's Word and see an example who most of us really do not want as a role model.



David
seemed to
really push
Saul's
buttons . . .

I'm thinking of Israel's first king, King Saul.

-- I'm specifically thinking about his interactions with David, who would become the second king.

-- David, who was promised that in his line would be One Who would be a Charter for all Mankind . . . the Messiah.

TR: One thing seems obvious from the text in 1 Samuel . . . READ SLIDE

David
seemed
to
really
push
Saul's
buttons

- Envy*
- Raving*
- Fear*
- Remove from presence*
- Anger*
- Conspiracy-thinking*
- Imputing bad motives*
- Unchanged by the
contrary evidence*

As we skim over a bunch of texts, we are going to see . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Let's turn to 1 Samuel 18 to start . . .

1 Samuel 18:8-9

And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" ⁹And **Saul eyed David from that day on.**

ESV

6

For context, in chapter 17 we find the account of David and Goliath. Saul had been too afraid to face the Philistine champion and was willing to allow the younger man to go to battle against this hulk of a brute.

-- But in the next chapter, David, the hero, becomes someone to keep an eye on . . . we read . . . READ SLIDE

-- Saul's defensiveness comes out in envy.

TR: It only gets worse.

1 Samuel 18:10-11

The next day a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and **he raved within his house** while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand. ¹¹And **Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall."** But David evaded him twice.

ESV

7

READ SLIDE

-- Saul became open to harmful spirits and started RAVING.

TR: Verse 12 continues . . .

1 Samuel 18:12-13

Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul. ¹³**So Saul removed him from his presence** and made him a commander of a thousand. And he went out and came in before the people.

ESV

8

READ SLIDE

- Saul was defensive because he was afraid.
- And he did what so many of us do . . . he got David out of his presence.
- But the way of peace is not merely removing the other person.

TR: David seemed to push Saul's buttons. When Saul saw that his daughter loved David, things got worse.

1 Samuel 18:28-29

But when Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, ²⁹Saul was **even more afraid of David**. So Saul was David's enemy continually.

ESV

9

READ SLIDE

TR: Defensiveness isn't usually focused on just one person. It becomes an infection of our soul.

1 Samuel 20:30

Then **Saul's anger was kindled** against Jonathan, and he said to him, “You son of a perverse, rebellious woman, do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?”

ESV

10

**Saul's anger even was directly at his beloved son, Jonathan . . .
READ SLIDE**

TR: Verse 31 continues . . .

1 Samuel 20:31

11

“For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, **neither you nor your kingdom shall be established.** Therefore send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die.”

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Saul's defensiveness went from protecting his reputation to protecting his legacy.
- Interestingly, by now the prophet Samuel had made it clear that the kingship would be taken from Saul.

TR: A few chapters later as Saul is chasing David, David gets food from the priests of Nob. When Saul finds out he says . . .

1 Samuel 22:13

And Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, **so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait,** as at this day?"

ESV

12

READ SLIDE

-- Paranoid defensiveness easily slips into conspiracy theory stuff .
.. everyone starts to look guilty.

TR: The priest responded that he knew nothing of all this and thought of David in totally different terms . . .

1 Samuel 22:14

Then Ahimelech answered the king,
“And who among all your servants is
so faithful as David, who is the king's
son-in-law, and captain over your
bodyguard, and honored in your
house?”

ESV

13

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 15 then points out what Saul is doing . . .

1 Samuel 22:15

“Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? No! **Let not the king impute anything** to his servant or to all the house of my father, for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little.”

ESV

14

READ SLIDE

-- He is imputing bad motives, evil intentions on David and anyone who seems to side with him.

TR: All this defensiveness is in spite of the massive evidence to the contrary. Flipping to chapter 24 . . .

1 Samuel 24:3

(Saul) came to the sheepfolds by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave.

ESV

15

Saul is chasing David with blood lust . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 4

1 Samuel 24:4-5

And the men of David said to him, "Here is the day of which the Lord said to you, '**Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand**, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.'" Then David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe. ⁵And **afterward David's heart struck him**, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

ESV

16

READ SLIDE

- How easy it would be to think David's men are reading the situation correctly . . . this is our moment for vengeance.
- But even the cutting off of the corner of Saul's robe struck David's heart as wrong.

TR: When Saul was some distance away, David called out . . .

1 Samuel 24:11

See, my father, see the corner of your robe in my hand. For by the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it.

ESV

17

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 12

1 Samuel 24:12

18

May the Lord judge between me and you,
may the Lord avenge me against you, but
my hand shall not be against you.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: The evidence seems clear . . . David is not out to get Saul. And Saul even seems to get it when he replies . . .

1 Samuel 24:20-21

And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. ²¹Swear to me therefore by the Lord that you will not cut off my offspring after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house."

ESV

19

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 22

1 Samuel 24:22

20

And David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home, **but David and his men went up to the stronghold.**

ESV

But though David swears safety for Saul and his family, it was clear that he still did not trust the paranoid, defensive man.

TR: His decision to withhold trust until there was the evidence of the fruits of repentance was the wise thing to do. For Saul continued to chase him.

1 Samuel 26:7b-8

And there lay Saul sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the army lay around him. ⁸Then Abishai said to David, "**God has given your enemy into your hand this day.** Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice."

ESV

21

Two chapters later we read . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Again, David restrains his man, but he . . .

1 Samuel 26:12

So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away. No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them.

ESV

22

READ SLIDE

TR: Then David again calls out, trying to persuade Saul of his loyalty. Again, Saul mouths the words of repentance.

Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake."

ESV

READ SLIDE

- But the rest of the story tells us that Saul hadn't really changed.
- He may have wanted to blame David for pushing his buttons, but in reality the issue was within Saul himself.

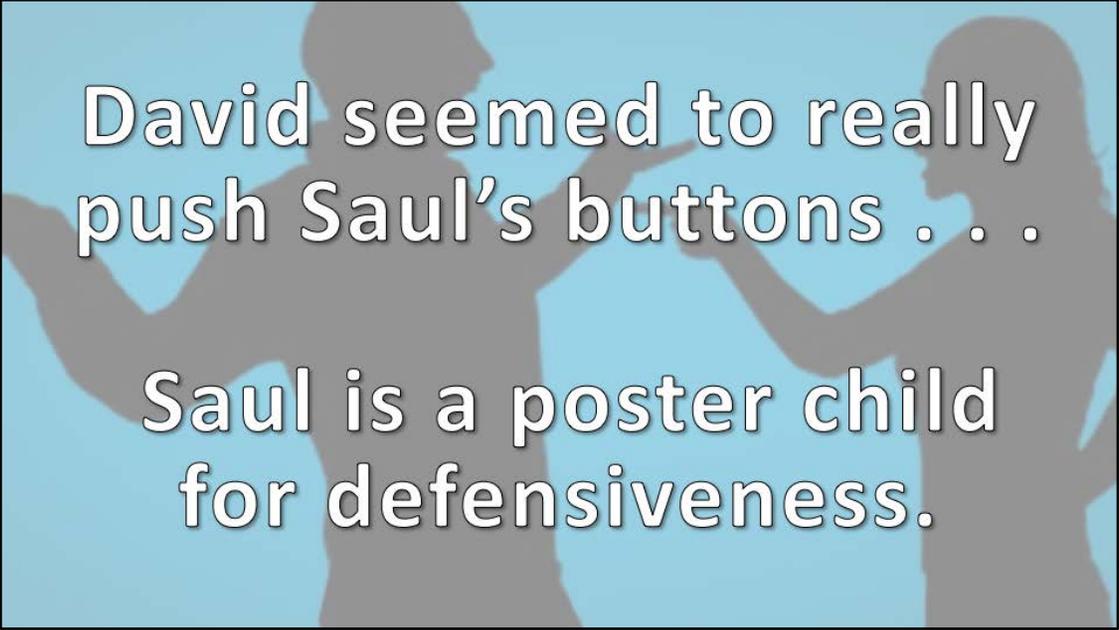
TR: Which of these symptoms of defensiveness come creeping out of the darkness in our lives?

David
seemed
to
really
push
Saul's
buttons

- ✓ *Envy*
- ✓ *Raving*
- ✓ *Fear*
- ✓ *Remove from presence*
- ✓ *Anger*
- ✓ *Conspiracy-thinking*
- ✓ *Imputing bad motives*
- ✓ *Unchanged by the contrary evidence*

READ SLIDE

TR: What is clear is that . . .



David seemed to really
push Saul's buttons . . .

Saul is a poster child
for defensiveness.

READ SLIDE

TR: But, when we are defensive it is not because someone has . . .



... the code to the dark parts of our hearts.

-- It is because we have dark parts in our hearts.

-- Other people do NOT control us.

-- They may push our buttons, but we program the keypad.

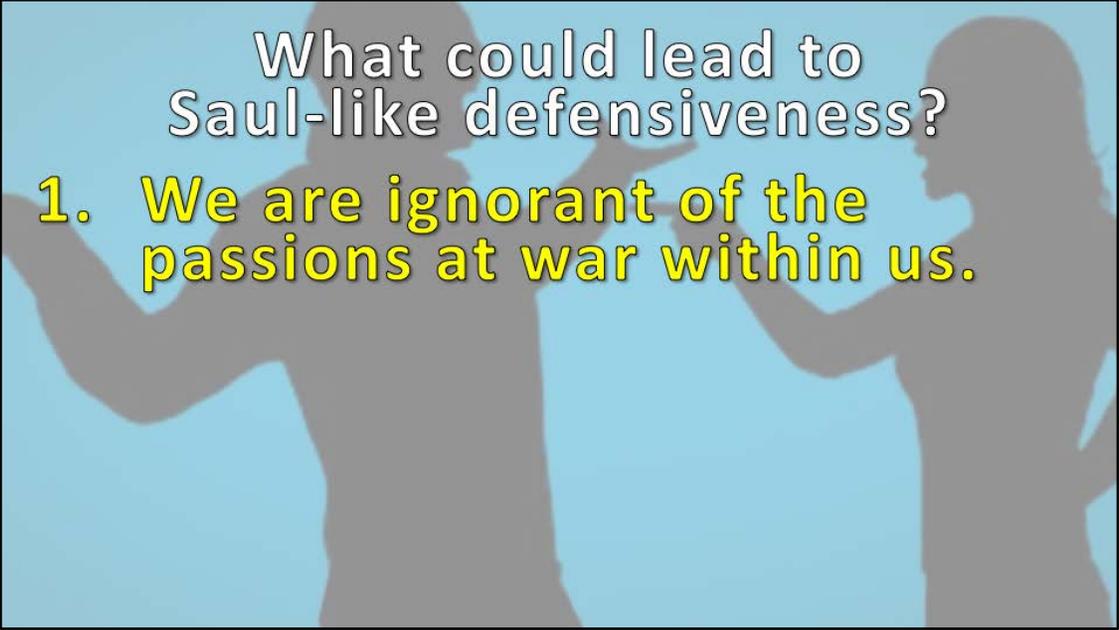
TR: Maybe we will admit that our buttons get pushed. Perhaps even easily. So ...



... READ SLIDE

-- We are moving in our notes to the larger box, down and to the right a bit.

TR: As I pondered what could lead to being like Saul, even if we say we don't want him as a role model, I considered how often you and I are ...



What could lead to
Saul-like defensiveness?

1. We are ignorant of the
passions at war within us.

28

READ SLIDE

TR: I'm thinking of James 4 . . .

James 4:1-3

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that **your passions are at war within you?**

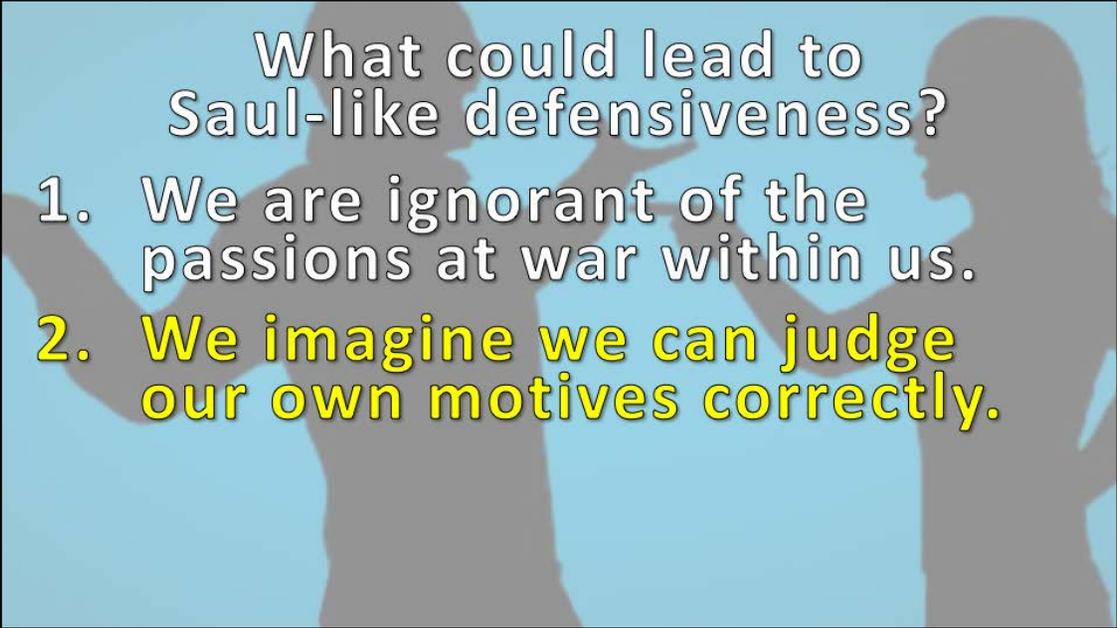
²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. *ESV*

29

READ SLIDE

- Quarrels and fights are rooted in our sinful passions.
- As many have said, the violation of the 10th commandment, to not covet, is at the root of much and even most sin.
- Even our prayer lives become distorted by thinking we can ask God for a spending spree on our sinful passions.

TR: I think many of us have Saul-like moments because we are ignorant of the battle between the flesh and the Holy Spirit.



What could lead to
Saul-like defensiveness?

30

1. We are ignorant of the passions at war within us.
2. We imagine we can judge our own motives correctly.

I also think a huge problem is that . . . READ SLIDE

-- The Judgment of Charity . . . even its weaker cousin, the Benefit of the Doubt, is something we tend to give ourselves so easily.

TR: As Proverbs 16 says . . .

Proverbs 16:2

All the ways of a man are pure
in his own eyes,
but the Lord weighs the spirit.

ESV

31

READ SLIDE

TR: I appreciate the NLT rendering of Proverbs 20:27 . . .

Proverbs 20:27

The Lord's light penetrates
the human spirit,
exposing every hidden motive.

NLT – New Living Translation

32

READ SLIDE

TR: Most influential in my wrestling through all this was Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 4

1 Corinthians 4:3-4

As for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority. I don't even trust my own judgment on this point. ⁴My conscience is clear, but that doesn't prove I'm right. **It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.**

NLT – New Living Translation

33

Again, from the NLT . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 5

1 Corinthians 4:5

So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. **For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives.** Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.

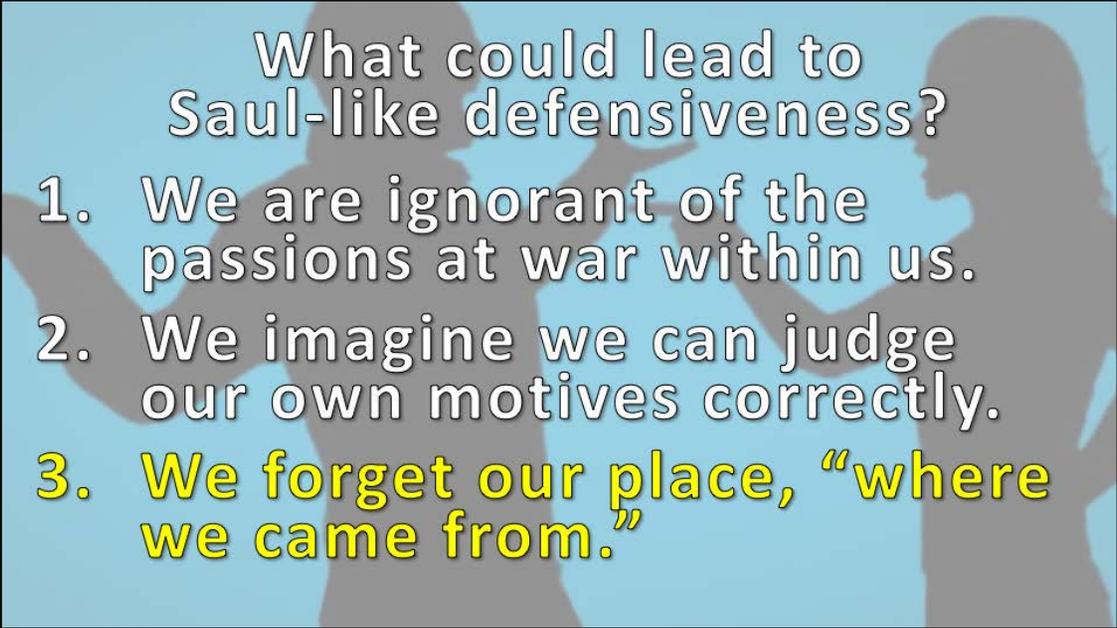
NLT – New Living Translation

34

READ SLIDE

- It is natural, that is, natural in the flesh, to give ourselves the Judgment of Charity.
- If our conscience is clear, then we're all good, or so we think.
- So, if I'm a bit defensive, it is a justified proportionate response . . . it is wrong for them to attack me.

TR: Saul's example comes back to mind as a third reason we could be lead to Saul-like defensiveness.



What could lead to
Saul-like defensiveness?

1. We are ignorant of the passions at war within us.
2. We imagine we can judge our own motives correctly.
3. We forget our place, “where we came from.”

35

Because . . . READ SLIDE

TR: I want to explore this a bit further.

We
forget

- Anything good we have has been a gift from God.*
- Our calling and usurp what isn't ours.*
- Obedience is better than sacrifice.*

In our notes, I'm moving to the third box, off a bit to the lower right.

-- When we forget our place, "where we came from," we forget . . .
. READ SLIDE

TR: Back to 1 Samuel 10 . . . a bit earlier in the account. When they were about to proclaim Saul as king . . . he had already been anointed with oil by the prophet Samuel. He was now to be proclaimed king through the taking of lots, to show it was God's choice.

1 Samuel 10:22-23

So they inquired again of the LORD, "Is there a man still to come?" and the LORD said, "**Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage.**" ²³Then they ran and took him from there. And when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.

ESV

37

But where was this anointed one? READ SLIDE

-- Saul was an insecure and fearful man. He may have stood head and shoulders above others, but he was no giant of a man, not a real man.

-- In all the displayed insecurity, all the defensiveness toward David, Saul seemed to forget that every good gift comes from God.

TR: We may not be a king of Israel, but we too have a calling, as 1 Corinthians tells us . . .

1 Corinthians 1:26-27a

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise;

ESV

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READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 27b

1 Corinthians 1:27b-29

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence of God

ESV

39

READ SLIDE

TR: We tend to become defensive when we forget . . .

✓ *Anything good we
have has been a gift
from God.*

We
forget

READ SLIDE

TR: A few chapters later in 1 Samuel we read of Saul getting ready to do battle with Israel's enemies.

1 Samuel 13:8-9

(Saul) waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. ⁹So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." **And he offered the burnt offering.**

ESV

41

READ SLIDE

- It was assumed that you needed God's favor to win the battle.
- It was Samuel's job to come and make the offerings as a prophet and a priest.

TR: But Saul forgot his place . . . and "did it himself."

**We
forget**

- ✓ *Anything good we have has been a gift from God.*
- ✓ *Our calling and usurp what isn't ours.*

We become defensive when we forget our calling and usurp what isn't ours.

- Saul had been called to be king, but not a priest.
- When we forget that all we have is a gift from God . . . including any position of influence or power . . . we get defensive . . .
- . . . and even grabby.
- Submission is one of the hardest things any of us will ever do . . . but a defensive person who has become Saul-like usually won't.

TR: Don't misunderstand . . . Saul had a good excuse for everything, at least to his own way of thinking. After all, the self-

judgment of charity is strong.

42

1 Samuel 13:10-11c

As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. ¹¹Samuel said, "What have you done?" **And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and . . .**

ESV

43

READ SLIDE

TR: Saul's heart was revealed when the heat was on and the timeline extended, just as our hearts are.

1 Samuel 13:14

“But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, **because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”**

ESV

44

Samuel told Saul . . . READ SLIDE

TR: God seems to give Saul another opportunity to prove himself . . . he was to [devote to destruction] a city.

1 Samuel 15:13-14

And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed be you to the LORD. I have performed the commandment of the LORD." ¹⁴And Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?"

ESV

45

But when . . . READ SLIDE

-- If all the animals were to be devoted to destruction . . . what then is this bleating of sheep.

-- Again, Saul has a good explanation . . . they were the best saved to make sacrifice.

TR: Saul became defensive because he forgot his place and that . .

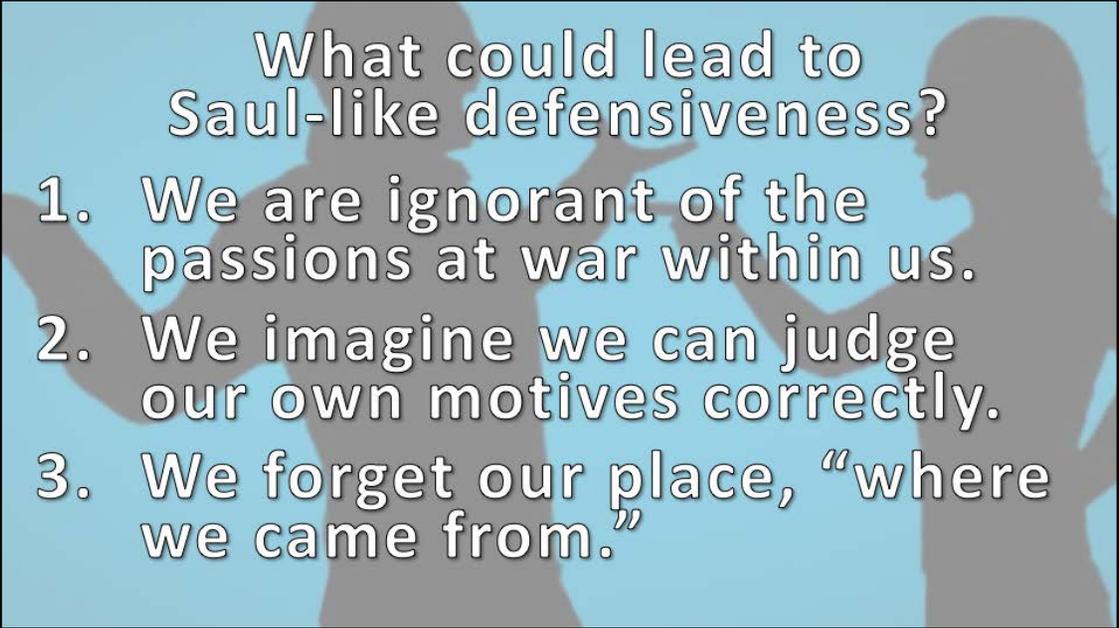
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We
forget

- ✓ *Anything good we have has been a gift from God.*
- ✓ *Our calling and usurp what isn't ours.*
- ✓ *Obedience is better than sacrifice.*

READ SLIDE

TR: I don't want Saul to be my role model. Do you? Even if we say we don't, we can easily be led down that path by . . .



What could lead to
Saul-like defensiveness?

1. We are ignorant of the passions at war within us.
2. We imagine we can judge our own motives correctly.
3. We forget our place, “where we came from.”

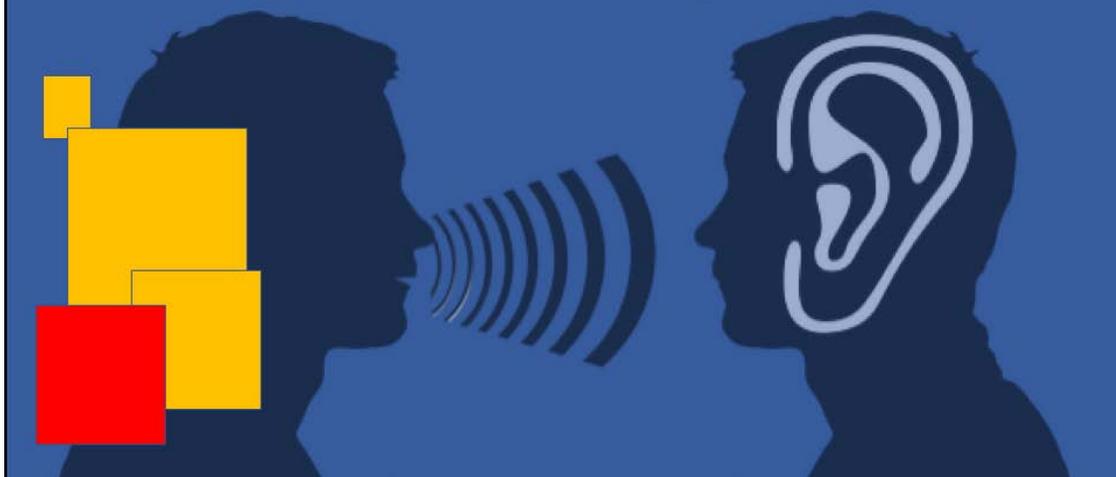
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READ SLIDE

TR: I think that we need one more brief section to this message.

What can we do
to be more open?

48



Instead of being defensive, we need to learn to be more open.

-- We need to learn how to be quick to listen.

-- We need big ears, not Dumbo-style, but open with empathetic curiosity . . . seeking to truly understand.

-- Though I can't unpack these three action steps, I am convinced they would help us move in the right direction.

TR: Instead of being ignorant of the passions that war within us . . . let's . . .

What can we do
to be more open?

1. **Admit** the struggle

49



READ SLIDE

TR: Since we all struggle with giving ourselves the Judgment of Charity, by excusing our disobedience and lack of faith in clever ways, we need to . . .

What can we do
to be more open?

1. Admit the struggle
2. **Humbly submit** to being laid bare by the Word of God and His Spirit.

50

... READ SLIDE

TR: The imagery in the book of Hebrews is that we are “laid bare” by the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12-13

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

ESV

51

READ SLIDE

- Why do we pray for and encourage our loved ones to be in the Word . . . to be under the Word?
- Because God works through His Word by His Spirit to change us . . . to expose the very thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

TR: If we are to be more open, we need to be less defensive. To be less defensive, we must allow Jesus to be our Defender.

What can we do
to be more open?

1. Admit the struggle
2. Humbly submit to being laid bare by the Word of God and His Spirit.
3. **Rest** in our security & significance in Christ.

52

We must . . . READ SLIDE

TR: The truly open follower of Christ is someone who has . . .

What can we do
to be more open?



**SECURE
HUMILITY**

53

READ SLIDE

- Saul certainly didn't have it.
- But our Savior certainly did and does.

Let's ask God for this gift . . . the core of being an open person . . . essential to being a true biblical peacemaker.