

After God's Own Heart **Embracing the Difference**

1 Samuel 8:4-20

We want to be people after God's Own Heart! But 1 & 2 Samuel is showing us exactly what that looks like with defining characteristics like Persisting in Pursuit, Discerning God's Voice, Resisting Superstition, and Returning to Repentance. Today, we will see another characteristic as we are **Embracing the Difference**.

Followers of Jesus do things that the outside world finds very different. We worship, gather, study the word.

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." **Romans 12:2**

Today we are going to see a moment when the people of God asked to be like everyone else and how that turned out for them in 1 Samuel 8:4-20.

*"Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah 5 and said to him, 'Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.' 6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' And Samuel prayed to the Lord. 7 And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. 8 According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. 9 Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.' 10 So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking for a king from him. 11 He said, 'These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. 12 And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. 14 He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. 15 He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. 16 He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. 17 He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. 18 And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.' 19 But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, 'No! But there shall be a king over us, 20 that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.'" **1 Samuel 8:4-20***

Main Idea: People After God's Own Heart Embrace the Difference of Being His People

I. Choose Faithfulness to God Over Everything Else – 1 Samuel 8:6-8

After the people demanded to be given a king to rule over them, Samuel does the right thing and prays about it. Notice the elements of his conversation with God. Samuel was displeased by their request (vs. 6), God told Samuel to give the people what they wanted (vs. 7), not to take it personally because they were not rejecting him (Samuel), but that they were rejecting God's kingship over them.

"According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you." **1 Samuel 8:8**

"Israel already had a king – the King of kings in fact – who was also the LORD of all the earth. They preferred to be led by a fallible human." **Tony Evans**

"And without faith it is impossible to please him..." **Hebrews 11:6**

Like Israel, we are prone to depend on our own devices, ideas, understandings, strategies, or the wisdom and powers of this world over faithfully trusting God

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II. Count the Cost of Rejecting God's Authority – 1 Samuel 8:9-18

After hearing Samuel's grief, God tells him to do 3 Things: 1) Heed the People's Request (vs. 7), 2) Warn them Solemnly (vs. 9), & 3) Inform them of the consequences associated with this idea. So, Samuel warned them (3rd Longest Sermon) of the many ways a king would inevitably oppress (Lives/Families/Wealth).

"And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day." **1 Samuel 8:18**

To be clear, it wasn't the idea of kingship that was so bad (Deut. 17:14-20 – *When you have a king...*), but the timing & reasoning behind it (be like all nations, fight our battles, do it all for us) was a clear rejection of God's Authority over them.

Sometimes God will answer our prayers in such a way that we get to learn the hard way that we were asking for the wrong thing (Lottery, Dream Job, Mr. Perfect).

It has been said that the sovereign God of the universe has a perfect will for our lives, but also a permissive will. Meaning, when we reject his perfect will he will permit us to go our own way to learn the hard way that Rejecting his Authority comes at a cost. Israel learned this over the next 450 years as they had 42 kings, only 11 of whom were mostly good, while 31 one of them were entirely wicked. Ultimately Israel would experience everything that Samuel told them they would (Sons/Daughters Taken, Harvest/Vineyards Seized, Grain Taxed, Employees Drafted, & Ultimate Enslavement). The cost of rejecting God's authority!

“We are more apt to leave God’s ways during times of well-being than in time of need. Prosperity seems to be a more fertile breeding ground for discontent and sin than does poverty.” Eugene Peterson

“Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.” Proverbs 13:13

Before we try to be like everyone else, we must count the cost!

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III. Resolve to be Different on Purpose – 1 Samuel 8:4-5, 19-20

Two separate times in this passage, the people were clear on their motives.

“Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations...But there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.” 1 Samuel 8:5b, 19b-20

“See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?” Deuteronomy 4:5-7

They wanted a king that would prove their legitimacy among the nations. A mighty warrior that would fight their battles for them. They want to point to a powerful person wearing armor to get the surrounding nations to respect them. But, it’s so tragic when you consider that they already had a vastly superior version of it!

“The sanctuary where God was worshipped, not a place where a king was enthroned, was the visible symbol of government in Israel...Their demand for a king, in the deepest sense, was an attempt to get out from under the rule of God.”

Eugene Peterson

We have the same impulse that Israel did. We want to fit in, we want to look like others with rulers we can feel, see, hear, follow, and control. We don’t call them kings or gods, they have other names: Security, Fulfillment, Freedom, Happiness.

“Whatever you depend on for happiness and security, you become the slave of that thing...every life has a king. A king in your life is whatever you must have in order to be happy and secure.” J.D. Greear

Earthly kings take from their subjects; Jesus gave it all. Earthly kings are driven by pride; Jesus is perfectly humble. Earthly kings are temporary; Jesus rules forever.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Zechariah 9:9

JESUS WAS NOT THE KING WE WANTED, as he’s not like other kings, BUT HE IS THE ONLY KING WE WILL EVER NEED as the King of kings!

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Sources and Further Reading Opportunities

- **CSB Study Bible** – Trevin Wax, Ed. (2017)
- **Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel** – J.D. Greear & Heath Thomas (2016)
- **Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the OT** – Warren Wiersbe (1993)
- **New American Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel** – Robert D. Bergen (1996)
- **Spurgeon Study Bible** – C.H. Spurgeon (2017)
- **First and Second Samuel** – Eugene H. Peterson (1999)
- **Tony Evans Study Bible** – Tony Evans (2019)
- **The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible** – Gordon D. Fee (2011)