

Reading Schedule for October 30 – November 5, 2017

Are you ready to meet David? As we have read currently, Saul's days as king are numbered. That is interesting to me because he will be a part of this week's readings and next week's readings, as he is jealous of David and wants to take David's life. Samuel will anoint David as king, but it would be at least 13 years before he would actually become king. Sometimes we receive promises from God and we think they should happen right at this moment. But God is faithful, even as he was faithful to Abraham and Sarah, which we read about in Romans. I am confident you will be inspired by this week's readings.

October 30 – I Samuel 15: "Then Saul said to Samuel, 'I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them. Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord.'" (vv. 24 & 25) As I read these words, I am ready to forgive Saul. And I believe the Lord did forgive him, but there would still be consequences because of his rebellion and arrogance. God wasn't rejecting Saul as a person, because he would be restored to relationship with God, but it was too late for him to be king. His character was compromised, and his judgment was selfish. This would be the last time Samuel would see Saul, even as we read that Samuel mourned for him. Our God has a tough love side to his character. If we are not truly repentant, he sees right through it. Saul was upset that he was caught, rather than desirous of changing. Do you agree? How do you respond to this chapter? In what ways is God speaking to you?

October 31 – I Samuel 16: "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'" (v.7) Sometimes I highlight unusual verses, and then other times I want to highlight ones that I know well. This verse I know so well, and I understand it to be a key component of how to grow spiritually. Proverbs 4:23 tells us to guard our heart, for everything you do flows from it. Samuel seemed even confused by who God's choice would be of the sons of Jesse. We already know that Saul was tall and handsome, and an impressive looking human being. Even Samuel could be caught up in those kinds of qualities. God is much more concerned about faith and character than our appearance that attracts people. We work so hard at our outward appearance, and oftentimes spend less energy on our inner character. God cares about the opposite. What steps are you taking to improve your heart's attitude? How does this inner emphasis challenge you?

November 1 – I Samuel 17: "This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel." (v.46) David had a vision about what God would do through him. I am inspired by David's faith, his exceptional courage, and his spiritual dependence upon God. These qualities I want in my own life. This is a very well-known story, and I know you have enjoyed reading all 58 verses. The verse that I quoted is the one that impresses me the most. It is estimated that David was 16 years old. As I have been visiting with our high school students, I have been encouraging them about the significance of their walk with God as a teenager. The Lord loves to use young people for his purposes. Pray for our Student Ministries as Andrew White is leading them into a new season of spiritual growth and a serving ministry to others. What stands out to you in this well-known chapter? Why?

November 2 – I Samuel 18: "And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself." (v.3) I always appreciate how relevant the Bible is in my day to day life. I need friendships in my life, and so did David. We read about this deep manly connection between Jonathan and David. We were introduced to Jonathan a few days ago, and now we see a connection between these two men and how willing they are to sacrifice for each other. Do you know what the exchange represents between David and Jonathan in verse 4? Most of this chapter is about Saul's jealousy of David. However I am going to be watching how Jonathan and David develop their relationship, and how loyal they remain to each other. I have to admit that Jonathan impresses me even more than David because he was willing to give up so much to honor God and to serve his friend David. What else seems significant to you in this chapter? How might you apply this message to your life?

November 3 – I Samuel 19: "Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan had taken a great liking to David and warned him, 'My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding and stay there.'" (vv. 1 & 2) I bet this got your attention because Jonathan did not obey his father. Even though his father was king and had authority, Jonathan would not break God's law. He would obey God rather than a man, even if the man was his father. Jonathan was already an adult himself, and he was accountable to God more than his dad. We know that a son is to be respectful, helpful and obedient to his father. But never does it instruct us to obey our earthly father if they are asking us to disobey God. The intensity of Saul's jealousy is even clearer, and it is obvious that Saul is floundering as a man of faith, in selfishness and jealousy. How do you respond to this discouraging chapter of hatred?

November 4 – I Samuel 20: "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father. But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David." (vv. 32 & 33) Things are only getting worse as Saul is on his own, without the help of God. Every step of the way, my admiration of Jonathan grows stronger. He could have made the move to become the next king, but would believe it was better for David than for himself. He wouldn't manipulate the situation to get his own way. At every turn Jonathan is a great example to us of loyalty and spiritual integrity. It comes to a head as his father is now trying to take his son's life as well. What do you notice about Jonathan and David's relationship? It is easy to identify their affection and covenant love for one another. What does this teach you about true friendship?

November 5 – I Samuel 21: "David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard." (vv. 12 & 13) I am not sure what to make of these verses. I appreciate David's determination to survive. God is not going to let the people of Gath, or the king himself, hurt David. God has great plans for David. I am not sure that this was God's direction for David, but no matter what motivated David to portray insanity is not the main issue in my thinking, rather that God would take care of David. The Messiah would be born in the line of David, and the Lord would take care of him. This seems like a very human effort but I see it as something God used to deliver his man. Your best efforts without God's protection are futile. Your worst efforts with God's protection are strong and sure. Do you know what I mean? How do you respond to this chapter?

Prayers: Begin to pray prayers of gratitude for God's help and provision in your life as we begin the month of November.