

Christian student ministry workers in Sweden developed a series of questions to ask when reading a Bible passage. Called the “Swedish Method” because of its origins, these questions can be used when reading the Bible by yourself or with others.

The daily readings in this family worship guide have a few questions. However, we encourage you, as appropriate for your family, to ask the following general questions of the text each day.



Is there something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most, or draws attention?



Is there something you don’t understand, or a question the passage raises in your mind?



Is there a personal application to your life?



Is there something you plan to share with someone else – and who will you share it with?



How do ideas in the passage interrelate? Or with other passages in this book – or in the whole Bible?

Worshipping Together is part of the vision and is a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Frankston, Victoria, Australia. frankstonrp.org.au bit.ly/WTrpcaf

The concept and layout draws heavily from *Let’s Worship God*, a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Airdrie, Scotland. airdrierpcs.org

The readings are from Tim Chester’s 3-year weekly reading plan. bit.ly/WkBbl or bit.ly/3yrBbl

The quote on the cover is from the article *What Shampoo and Family Worship Have in Common*, Written by Randy Greenwald, (Quoted from *Tabletalk* magazine, Nov 1997.)

Notes this week are drawn in part from commentaries on 1 Samuel by Gordon Keddie, John Woodhouse, and Dale Ralph Davis

Worshipping Together



We love God because He first loved us.

And we love to tell God that we love Him.

Joyful and faithful worship together twice each Lord’s Day is the highlight of our week. We are glad that they said, “Let us go to the House of the Lord.” Corporate worship prepares us for the week and prepares us for Heaven.

In addition, we regularly worship God as families and as individuals.

One father put it this way:

The back of my shampoo bottle says, “Lather, rinse, repeat.” Simple enough that even I can do it. Though family worship may be a bit more complicated than shampooing hair, it ought not to be rated with “home dentistry” in the scale of difficulty.



If you could buy family worship in the store, it would come in the form of a Bible, and the directions would simply say, “Read, pray, repeat.” Men should gather their families at least once daily. They should read a portion of the Scriptures to them. And they should pray with them. There need be no fireworks or pizzazz to keep the kids interested. There needs to be only a father* with a heart-love for God – who desires to see that love appropriated by his children.*

Read, pray, repeat.

* Fathers leading their family in worship is always the goal. When, in the Lord’s providence, the father is absent or uninterested a godly mother will lead her children

Reading 1 Samuel 15:1-3² God's Justice

Notes (See back page for authors)
God commanded Saul through Samuel, "I will punish Amalek. Go. Attack. Utterly destroy."
That was the word of Yahweh of hosts (v. 2a). Saul was to listen to it and obey it (v1). Some readers, however, are bothered not with Saul's partial obedience but with Yahweh's severe command. The total "curse of destruction" sounds horrid. How can these be the words of the God whose compassion is over all that he has made (Ps. 145:9)? How can we claim this passage as the word of this God?

To begin a response.... First, it is horrid. Second, our claim is only that Scripture is true, not that it is sanitized. Third, Yahweh's vengeance should not be repudiated but praised if it is virtuous vengeance, that is, if it is a just vengeance.

It is precisely in God's vengeance that his people find comfort! Yahweh does not forget how his enemies have hated, trampled, and crushed his people. To hear "See! Your God will come with vengeance!" (Isa. 35:4) is to hear good news of great joy, for that means that God will put down and overthrow all who strangle and oppress his people. If he does not do that, what ultimate hope do we have? (Davis)

- Questions** (see back page for explanation of symbols)
1. What was God's command to Saul?
 2. How is God's vengeance the gospel?
 3. Since God takes vengeance, why can't we?
 4.     

- Praise Pray** Psalm 64b³
1. Give thanks with your family for God's just justice
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

¹ You will notice we only have a printed guide for 6 days. We recommend each Lord's Day you review the previous week's readings and/or the previous or current week's sermons and pray together

² A variation this week in that the family worship text is not in the weekly reading

³ Psalm selections are taken from the *Book of Psalms for Worship*. We encourage our congregation to sing the same selection each day for a week to gain familiarity with the selection

Reading 1 Samuel 16:4-16 God looks on/with the heart

Notes (See back page for authors)
Samuel went to Bethlehem in obedience to God to offer a sacrifice and to anoint a king. God's choice would be from the sons of Jesse, so they are invited to the sacrifice. When Samuel sees the firstborn son, Eliab, he sees an obvious king. "Surely this is the one!" he thinks. How easily Samuel falls back into seeing things from a merely human perspective. Saul was tall and handsome – he looked kingly. Now, Eliab looks, to Samuel, kingly.

But Samuel is looking the wrong way. He is, in fact, unable to look the right way. For the right way of looking is not with the eyes, but with God's heart. *God is not limited as we are limited. Therefore, if God has a point of view, that point of view will not be simply one more point of view among many others. His unlimited point of view will have an absolute validity.*

But verse 7 is almost certainly saying even more than this. Translated more literally the last sentence of verse 7 goes like this: "For the LORD sees not as man sees, for man sees according to the eyes, but the LORD sees according to the heart."

That is, when God sees, he does not just see things with the eyes, as we do, taking in only impressions. God sees according to his heart. That is, God's point of view is determined by his own will and purpose. He sees according to his own intentions, his heart. (Woodhouse)

- Questions** (see back page for explanation of symbols)
1. How does Samuel intend to recognise God's king?
 2. How does God intend to recognise His king?
 3. Do outward appearances matter? Why or why not?
 4.     

- Praise Pray** Psalm 64b
1. Pray that you and your family will have a heart after God, with God's help
 2. Pray for your family
 3. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member
 4. Pray for the reading and preaching of God's word tomorrow

Reading

1 Samuel 16:1-4 God chooses for Himself a king

Notes
(See back page for authors)

Samuel is mourning for Saul, but God has rejected Saul. Indeed *the word rejection could be the motto for Saul's kingship... Saul's kingship had its origin in rejection—the people's rejection of the Lord as their king.* (Woodhouse) And, we could well say, Saul's kingship has its end in rejection – God rejecting Saul as king. Instead God will provide a king for Himself (that is, for His glory rather than the whims of His people.)

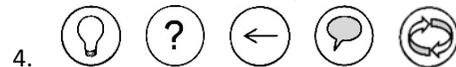
Having already told Samuel that He will seek a king after His own heart (13:13) God now tells Samuel to go and anoint him as king. Even though Samuel fears for his life if Saul finds out, he obeys God and goes to Bethlehem to anoint God's choice.

Was there not something proper in Samuel's grief? He was not upset over a lousy bowling score or because someone sideswiped his Chevy Beretta or because he had only a three-bedroom house. Rather he was distressed over the spiritual disaster of a promising instrument of God, over the welfare of God's people, over their condition and security. Do we ever mourn over such matters? ... There is something commendable, instructive, in Samuel's distress.

And there is something encouraging in Yahweh's instructions. Yahweh is able to provide a new beginning; he will provide for his people when all is coming undone. The true King never loses control of his kingdom; he is never nonplussed by the latest emergency in his realm. Hence Yahweh's choice spells hope. (Davis)

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. Was Samuel's mourning for Saul a good or bad thing?
2. Why does God tell Samuel to stop mourning for Saul?
3. What will be markedly different over this next king?



Praise Pray

- Psalm 64b
1. Rejoice with your family that God is not hindered by evildoers
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading

1 Samuel 15:4-15 I did what God said – almost

Notes
(See back page for authors)

Saul went to attack the Amalekites as God had commanded. He set out well, it seemed. Yet we soon see his heart and actions were governed, not by God's word, but by his own feelings of right and wrong. He spared the king, and he and the people were unwilling to destroy the good stuff along with the worthless stuff, so they kept the best of the animals of Amalek.

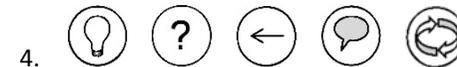
God's response was one of regret. How are we to understand the sovereign God who controls all things regretting anything – particularly something He has done? *It is a tragedy when Saul refuses to be Yahweh's disciple; it grieves Yahweh. He is not a "you win some, you lose some" god. Nonchalance is never listed as an attribute of the true God. Verse 11 does not intend to suggest Yahweh's fickleness of purpose but his sorrow over sin; it does not depict Yahweh flustered over lack of foresight but Yahweh grieved over lack of obedience.* (Davis)

Samuel too was grieved over Saul's sin and faithfully confronted him. Saul claims to have obeyed God, but Samuel hears animal noises. "What are these?" he asks. "Oh, those?" Saul replies. "Well, the people kept the best – but with the best intentions – so we could sacrifice them to God in worship."

How often do we do *almost* all that God commands? How often do we let our feelings, our sense of right and wrong, rather than God's word be the determining factor in our decisions?

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. What part of God's command did Saul carry out?
2. What part of God's command did Saul ignore? And why?
3. How should we understand God's regret in making Saul king?



Praise Pray

- Psalm 64b
1. Commit yourself and your family in prayer to do all that God commands, with God's help.
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading 1 Samuel 15:16-23 What does God delight in?

Notes
(See back page for authors)

Samuel nor God are impressed with Saul's disobedience, nor his attempt at pretending to have God-honouring motives. Samuel shuts Saul up and brings God's charges against him. We might summarise them this way. 1- God make you King, don't hide behind the people. 2- God gave you a clear command to completely destroy the Amalekites. And 3- Why did you swoop down like a bird of prey on what you saw as good?

Saul repeats his claim, "But I did obey. I destroyed all the people except the king. The people kept the best but only for a sacrifice to God. Isn't that good enough?" We should think in response both, "How pathetic!" and "How much that is like the way I think and act at times!"

Samuel's response is to declare that God cares more about obedience than sacrifice. *It was not that the making of sacrifices according to God's Word was unimportant. The point was that the external form without the inward obedience was rendered little better than an offence to God (Ps. 50:7-15, 51:10-19, Isa 1:11-17). The Lord was not – is never – interested in show and pretence. A fresh coat of paint can make crumbling walls look pretty for a little while, but will never prevent them from collapsing!* (Keddie)

To disobey God is to worship self, not God. Do we evaluate our sin on the basis of God's standard, or ours?

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. What are God's charges against Saul?
2. What does God want from His people?
3. What is stubbornness and rebellion against God like?

4.     

Praise Pray

- Psalm 64b
1. Commit yourself and your family in prayer to true worship and true obedience, with God's help.
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading 1 Samuel 15:24-35 The kingdom torn from Saul

Notes
(See back page for authors)

Saul realises he is in trouble. But rather than a full and sincere repentance he continues to blame others and seeks forgiveness for his good, not for God's glory. How different are his words in v24-25 from David's in Psalm 51:4, 5, 10?

Samuel replies that since Saul has rejected God, God has likewise rejected Saul, *as if to say, "Did you really hear me, Saul? It's hardly a matter of saying, 'O.K., I admit I did wrong; now let's get things back to normal.'"* (Davis) Again, how much we are like that at times?

Saul, not liking this reply any better than the first, grabs Samuel's robe. This is likely not a violent response, but more akin to desperate begging. In God's providence the robe tore – a visual picture of God tearing the kingdom from Saul. Even then, it appears that Saul's primary concern is his own honour. And his stated desire to worship in v30 shows us the heart of the problem. "Let me worship the Lord *your* God, Samuel." Are you children worshipping the Lord your God or the Lord your parents' God?

Samuel then carries out God's divine justice against Agag, the Amalekite king, putting him to death. And, he departs, to return to Saul no more. And God, who will not regret v29 regrets v35. Though Saul's sin grieved Him, nothing God had purposed to happen will not happen. *In the bigger picture, all that has happened is exactly what God said would happen in 1 Samuel 12:15, if the king and the people did not obey the voice of the Lord.* (Woodhouse)

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. How does Saul respond to God's rejection and judgment?
2. What does God tear away from Saul? And why?
3. How can God regret and yet not regret?

4.     

Praise Pray

- Psalm 64b
1. Rejoice with your family in prayer in God's sovereign control
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member