

# Sermon Study Guide

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May 14/15, 2016

## THE MAIN THING:

On the brink of a decision we may lose our focus on God's plan for us. Saul and David chose their own paths. David made a mid-course correction to return to God. However far we have strayed from God, we can always turn back to Him.

## PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. When have you made a decision that you knew was the wrong one to make? How did God redeem that decision?
2. Where have you acted in a way in which it was easier to 'ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission'?

## PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. What are two defining events described in 1 Samuel 13:1-15 and 1 Samuel 15:1-9 that led to God's statement, "I am grieved that I have made Saul king"? (1 Sam 15:11a)
2. What are two defining events in David's life (2 Samuel 11:1-26) that led Nathan to repeat God's statement, "Why did you despise the word of the Lord"? (2 Sam 12:9)
3. Compare the interchanges between Saul/Samuel (1 Sam 15:12-26) and David/Nathan (2 Sam 12:1-14).  
What is the same about the prophets' messages to the kings?  
What is different about the Kings' responses?
4. Pastor Ashwin said, "True biblical repentance is not merely feeling bad or sorry or being remorseful for your actions. But it's coming to a deep realization that you have sinned against God Almighty and you need His forgiveness...."

Psalm 51 provides a deeper look at David's repentance.

What words/phrases from Psalm 32:3 and 51:1-12 show his true repentance?

What did David say about himself?

What did David ask God to do?

Contrast this with Saul's words from 1 Samuel 15:24, 25, 30, 31.

5. Pastor Ashwin said, "The most important truth about sin that is least recognized today is every sin is ultimately a sin against God. Don't ever downplay it. While the Bible acknowledges the horizontal nature of sin – it consistently presents sin as a vertical offence!"  
How do David and Saul illustrate the difference?

## PURSUE MISSION: *Seek to be the community of God's people in your community*

1. How can you use Psalm 5:1-12 in your life this week to experience repentance and God's redemption?
2. Reflect on where you might be seeking horizontal forgiveness rather than vertical repentance.
3. Who is a 'Nathan' or 'Samuel' in your life? To whom can you be a 'Nathan' or 'Samuel'?

## THE WORD (NIV)

**1 Samuel 13:1-15, 24,25,30,31; 15:1-9**

**2 Samuel 12:1-14**

**Psalm 32:3**

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.

**Psalm 51:1-12**

- <sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
blot out my transgressions.
- <sup>2</sup> Wash away all my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.
- <sup>3</sup> For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.
- <sup>4</sup> Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
and justified when you judge.
- <sup>5</sup> Surely I was sinful at birth,  
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
- <sup>6</sup> Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;  
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
- <sup>7</sup> Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- <sup>8</sup> Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- <sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my sins  
and blot out all my iniquity.
- <sup>10</sup> Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me

Where you are in life today and what your future is likely to be are the results of your decisions. As Christ-followers, God wants us to make decisions that positively revolutionize our lives as well as the world around us. Scripture teaches that God has a destiny—His big vision for each of us. What happens when we turn off God's Highway towards our own destiny? How do we make up for bad decisions that take us on a detour? Saul and David illustrate two ways to respond.

Saul and David had similar origins. Both came from herder families and were in charge of animals; both were anointed by Samuel and were filled with God's Spirit; both became kings at about 30 years of age and reigned for 40 years; both made life-altering decisions, bad choices to leave God's pathway.

Saul, the first King of Israel, started well, and then was carried away by his success. The Lord's instructions were to wait for Samuel to offer sacrifices before Israel went to war. Impatient Saul offered sacrifices himself. (1 Sam 13) Later Samuel brought God's word for Saul, "Destroy the Amalekites, don't spare anyone or anything" but Saul disobeyed and built a monument in his own honour. (15:1-26) God regretted having made him king because Saul had turned away from Him and not carried out His instructions. (15:9-11)

David was a man after God's own heart, faithful to Him and successful. Then David made a series of decisions that resulted in disaster. He chose not to go into battle to lead his army, spied beautiful Bathsheba, slept with her and she became pregnant. Then David plotted to have her husband killed in battle so she could join his harem. (2 Sam 11:1-27) A heart that turns away from God is alienated from Him, puts self in the drivers' seat, disobeys Him and makes self-centred choices. It can happen to us.

We can identify with Saul or David: Is there any hope? Have we totally missed out on God's plan?

God in mercy gets our attention, not to condemn us but to bring conviction that results in our repentance and conversion. God sent Nathan to confront David (2 Sam 12:1-19) and sent Samuel to confront Saul. (1 Sam 15:10-23) Both had a choice: to respond by making a mid-course correction to align themselves with God's Highway or to continue on their own rebellious, destructive path.

**Psalm 51 is the greatest, most complete expression of repentance. To recover from a wrong turn:**

1. Admit you are wrong (Ps 51:3-6; 32:3) David did (2 Sam 12:13-14) but Saul did not; he was deluded, he downplayed and minimized his failure, he blamed others and defended himself. (1 Sam 15:13,20)

2. With a broken spirit and contrite heart, confess your sin. (Ps 51:1-3, 17) As pain is a natural mechanism to protect our body, so guilt is designed to protect our soul, to convict us of our sin.

3. Confess that you have sinned AGAINST THE LORD. (Ps 51:4) The Bible acknowledges the horizontal nature of sin against others, yet presents sin as a vertical offence against Almighty God, seeing sin as God sees it. God was now distant not personal (Ps 51:11), "your God" not 'my God'. (1 Sam 15:15, 21, 30;

4. Cry out for His forgiveness; have a genuine change of heart. (Ps 51: 7-12) Saul was concerned about his self-image, not total obedience. (1 Sam 15:22-30) David wrote his confession for all to see. He cried out for God to forgive and to restore his joy, intimacy, peace, comfort and power. (Ps 51)

There were irreversible consequences for both kings. Saul's life spiraled out of control when an evil spirit took hold of him. David and Bathsheba's son died. Erwin Lutzer said, "Bad decisions cannot be undone but they can be redeemed." David turned back to God who brought good out of what was evil. Later David and Bathsheba's son, Solomon, became the next king, built a temple for God and was in the lineage of Jesus.

If you have taken a wrong turn, seek the Lord in true Biblical repentance evidenced by a broken spirit and a broken, contrite heart.