

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, February 14, 2010

Passage: 1 Samuel 4:1b-11

Memory Passage: James 4:7-8

TODAY: *From your study this past week, what is one thing that impressed you that can be of help in your life?*

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

[Note to leader: Have people sum up this days findings, add anything relevant or interesting, then move on to day 2.]

- (a) **Read 1 Samuel 4:1-2.** This section begins a long section of scripture on the Ark of the Lord and the Philistines. Let's take a closer look on these two topics. The Philistines emerge in Judges at the beginning of the story of Samson as enemies of the Israelites (see Judges 13:1).
- (b) Where were the Philistines from and where did they reside (Gen. 10:14, 1 Samuel 30:14; Ezekiel 25:16; to get exact information try doing a web search or Wikipedia search on what you find)? Who did the Philistines worship as their god(s) (Judges 16:23; 1 Samuel 31:10; 2 Kings 1:2)?
- (c) The Philistines were so successful against the Israelites in battle for several reasons, but what technological advantage did they have over the Israelites (1 Samuel 13:5, 19-22)? What kind of ban and why had the Lord placed against horses (Deut 17:14-17)?
- (d) What did the Ark of the Covenant look like (Exodus 25:10-22)? What functions did it play (Exodus 16:31-33; 25:16, 22)?
- (e) *Family:* Read 1 Samuel 4:1-2. If you have little kids (or you want a chance to color), open up your bible to Exodus 25:10-22 and draw a picture of what the Ark of the Covenant might have looked like. If you are not so coloring inclined, look at the functions that the Ark played in Israel (Exodus 16:31-33; 25:16, 22)? Why was it so important? Why don't we have an ark or something any more (1 Corinthians 3:16)?

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read 1 Samuel 4:3-5.** After a sound defeat, the Israelites thoughts turn toward religion for help. Who do they attribute their defeat to? Is this good or bad theology (Proverbs 21:31)? How would you have responded in a similar situation?
- (b) What do they see as a possible answer for their problems? Why would they have thought that this would have helped them (Numbers 10:33-36; Josh 3:3-7; 6:6-21)? What is different between these examples and the one we have here?
- (c) Can you think of similar ways that people do what the Israelites are doing? Why is their a tendency for us to try to use God?
- (d) How are we to respond to God (2 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Timothy 2:21; James 4:7-8)? There is a tendency to try to use God as a means to our own desires at times. We try to use God by promising to pray more, read our Bible more or maybe even to give more, but all of these things are motivated by our own desires. According to the verses we have already looked at, what is the motivation we are supposed to have?
- (e) *Family:* Read 1 Samuel 4:3-5. (Do this today or tomorrow). How were the Israelites treating the Ark of the Covenant? Were they really relying on God? How do we rely on things rather than God? Do we ever try to use God like the Israelites do? Pray that you would have faith in God and place your desires at His feet.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read 1 Samuel 4:3-5.** Yesterday, we looked at trying to use God instead of trusting in God. Today we will look at misplacing hope in things and people instead of in God. The Israelites thought that the Ark would give them the power to defeat their enemies.
- (b) Why is it so easy to put trust in things, our own ability, or even ideas? How should our faith in God drive our faith in other things such as science (Colossians 1:16-17)? How would a misplaced faith in something like science affect our faith in God if they seemed to stand in contradiction?
- (c) This same idea can be applied to our leaders. How can an overemphasized trust in your pastor lead to a crisis of faith if he happens to fall spiritually? How does Paul address this issue in 1 Corinthians 3:4-9 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17?

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read 1 Samuel 4:6-9.** We get a little scene shift to the Philistines camp. They respond to the shout that can be heard from two miles away where they are camped. How do they respond when they hear the Ark has arrived?

- (b) What do they know about the Israelites and the Lord? What misconceptions do they have? What are common misconceptions that our society has about Christians?
- (c) What does this say about the kind of example that the Israelites had set among the nations? How do our actions reinforce the common misconceptions that our society has?
- (d) How does Paul instruct us to live amongst others (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12)? Are you doing anything that brings unbiblical offense to people outside the church? How are you perceived amongst those outside the church?
- (e) *Family*: Read 1 Samuel 4:6-9. What misconceptions about God and Israel did the Philistines have? What kind of misconceptions does the world have of Christians? How do they get those misconceptions? How does Paul instruct us to live with regards to the world (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12)?

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read 1 Samuel 4:10-11.** This is not a surprise ending for us. How did we know that this was going to happen (1 Samuel 2:34)? Sometimes it easy to read over a few sentences and move along. Read over these verses again. How staggering would all of these things be to a nation?
- (b) It is believed that soon after this, the temple at Shiloh is destroyed (See Psalm 78:60; Jeremiah 7:12-14). The Ark never returns there, and it does not take a prominent role in the story of Israel after this. Reading these passages, under what circumstances was the temple at Shiloh destroyed (Psalm 78:60-61; Jeremiah 7:12-14, 26:6,9)?
- (c) All of this is linked back to the way in which Eli had led or failed to lead the people and his sons. What does this say about the great responsibility that both ministers have in the shepherding of their people and parents have in their instruction of children? How do we see the link between being a manager of one’s household and manager of the church linked here in the life of Eli (1 Timothy 3:4-5)?

DAY 6 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

Think back through what you have learned each day this week. Do you find yourself trying to use God more than letting God use you? Is there any way that you have been trying to manipulate God that you need to repent of? What kind of witness are you being to non-Christians that you know? Do they know what you believe? Do they have any misconceptions? How could you reach out to them and answer questions or concerns they have about God?

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The Folly of Using God
“Let us bring the ark...that it may save us”