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Hey small group leaders! As we continue our journey through 1 Samuel, we hope you commit yourselves to Samuel's attitude found in 1 Samuel 3:10: "Speak, for your servant is listening." If we allow our lives to be filled with humility, obedience, and trust, God's word (the Bible) will continue to point us to THE Word (Jesus) so we can be a blessing to those around us!

Thank you for shepherding a group of people to Love God, Love Others, and Live Sent!

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?
Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or discipleship@rockbridge.cc

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"The Christian who has stopped repenting has stopped growing."

[A.W. Pink]

LEADER RESOURCES || Leader Note *We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well. Access a resource by clicking on the underlined title and share them with your group!*

- **Passage Summary**
 - Israel has reached a decisive point, and Samuel teaches them that it's the point of true (vs. false) repentance, where all fresh starts begin. Victory comes at Mizpah over the Philistines, but the reasons are spiritual (not militarily), as the path of repentance brings the presence of God. The chapter ends with Samuel's ongoing ministry throughout Israel.
- **Chapter 7 Commentary & Til Now He Has Helped Me**
 - Use this commentary and short devotional video to give you background for this week's discussion. These would be good resources to share with your group before you gather.
- **Have You Ever Been Cut to the Heart?**
 - This article reminds us that true repentance leads to a willingness to go wherever he tells us to go and do whatever he tells us to do. This would be a good resource to share with your group after you gather.

ICEBREAKER || Leader Note *The main goal for the icebreaker is to build joy and gratitude together.*

What are you grateful for or what has brought you joy over the past week?

BEGIN WITH PRAYER || Leader Note *Wherever two or more are gathered in God's name, He is there! We want to begin our time together by thanking him for being present with us and praying God's Word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray as you begin your time in a posture of humility and dependence!*

Spend a moment praying the following passage, beginning in a posture of humility and gratitude!

"Be gracious to me, God, according to your faithful love; according to your abundant compassion, blot out my rebellion. Completely wash away my guilt and cleanse me from my sin."

[Psalm 51:1-2]

MAIN POINT || Leader Note *Read this aloud as a road map for where the discussion should go.*

Crossroad moments and fresh starts all begin with serious repentance. Will we truly seek Him?

PASSAGE || Leader Note *Have someone read the passage aloud slowly. Consider having another person read it a second time, possibly in a different translation.*

- 1 Samuel 7:2-17

DISCUSSION || Leader Note *Your role is to FACILITATE the conversation, so keep your group moving and encourage multiple people to share. The questions do not need to be asked in order and not every question has to be answered ... there is freedom to go where the Spirit is leading your group! Look for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God in the lives of your group!*

1. Twenty years have passed since the Ark went to Kiriath-Jearim. What had the Israelites been worshiping all of this time? Why would the Israelites be longing for the Lord after all these years? *Read aloud Psalm 115:4-8 and Jeremiah 2:13 for more context if needed.*
2. When you think of "following after God", do words like satisfying, sweet, and refreshing come to your mind? Why or why not?
3. In the past or currently, how has your relationship with the Lord been more duty than delight? Have you ever had a time when the words above (satisfying, sweet, and refreshing) described your relationship with God? Describe it. What keeps you from having that every day?
4. In v. 3, we learn why the Israelites are not in relationship with the Lord. The Israelites though, seem ready to turn toward the Lord. What are Samuel's requirements for turning to the Lord? Why is this so important? *Read aloud Matthew 6:24 for more context if needed.*
5. Is there or has there been something in your life that is/was an idol that you were not willing to give up? How does/did that affect your relationship with the Lord?
6. In v. 5-11, what do the Israelites do once they have gathered at Mizpah? How do they show their contrition to the Lord? Why is fasting sometimes the proper thing to do when struggling with a particular sin?
7. The Israelites merely gathered to repent of their sin, but now the Philistines are coming to attack. How is their reaction now different from their reaction in chapter 4? How does this show genuine repentance? What can we learn about the nature of genuine repentance from this?
8. How is God faithful to honor the prayers and sacrifices of His people? How does God make sure that His people know that it was He who saved them?
9. The word "Ebenezer" means "stone of help." What characteristic of God's help is emphasized in describing God as a "stone of help"? How has God shown Himself as a "stone of help" in your life?
10. What kind of markers do you have for your relationship with the Lord? Why is it helpful for us to remember these things? What is a practical way for you and your family to do this?

11. What can we learn from Samuel's ministry as it is described in v. 16-17? How is his life a model for us?

STEP OF OBEDIENCE || Leader Note *This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.*

As our intimacy with Jesus deepens, repentance becomes LESS about a specific sin, guilt, shame and consequences and MORE about returning to God as our "first" love and highest Treasure. Based on our conversation today and the leading of the Holy Spirit, ***what is a step of obedience that you can take to live out this passage and the truths above?***

Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 3-4 for this question.

PRAYER FOCUS || Leader Note *We want to commit to praying for OTHERS as a unified church who is dependent upon God for everything. Be intentional about saving at least 5-10 minutes for prayer at the end of your small group each week to pray for the focused area below. You are encouraged to break into smaller groups of 3-4 people if your group is much larger than that.*

Vocation As Worship

- As we reflect on Labor Day, let's pray for one another to honor God in our vocations as an act of worship and witness.
- Let's praise God for His provision of meaningful work, and ask Him to strengthen us to honor Him with our work ethic and example.

Optional Closing Prayer *This would be a good prayer to read TOGETHER as you close your time. If you don't, consider texting it to your group the day after.*

Gracious God, our sins are too heavy to carry,
too real to hide, and too deep to undo.
Forgive what our lips tremble to name,
what our hearts can no longer bear,
and what has become for us
a consuming fire of judgment.
Set us free from a past that we cannot change;
open to us a future in which we can be changed;
and grant us grace to grow more
and more in your likeness and image,
through Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.