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"The Christian who has stopped repenting has stopped growing."
[A.W. Pink]

ICEBREAKER

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

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

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

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

PASSAGE.

- 1 Samuel 7:2-17

DISCUSSION

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?
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?
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

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?*

PRAYER FOCUS

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

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.