

Many or Few Response Guide

1 Samuel 14:1-23

Bethany Assembly of God

10/25/2020

- Start by reading 1 Samuel 14:1-23. Who are the major characters? What differences do you note in their attitudes, actions, and words?
- What do you think is the central or defining moment of this story? Why? (Hint: It's a statement made by one of the characters about God and it applies as much today as it did then!)
- What are some of the biggest problems you see in your family, community, nation, or in our world?
- Do you ever encounter situations in which you know that something should be done but you feel helpless to do anything?

The Scriptures indicate that we are often given opportunities to willingly cooperate with God in His saving work. Much depends on how we respond to Him. You can be a willing instrument of salvation.

1. Saul: Fear, Disobedience, and the Company They Keep

- Read 1 Samuel 13:5-14 to get a little context for what was going on in Saul's life.
- What was the big deal about Saul not waiting to make the sacrifice? What did it reveal about Saul?

The actions of Israel's kings were to demonstrate dependence on God. They were to say, "In Israel, the Lord is King and obedience to Him is paramount." As the first king, this was especially important for Saul, and his actions didn't say that. As such, he was unfit for the position.

- Dependence on God is one of Bethany's core values. Is it one of yours? How would you know? What does dependence on God look like?
- Read 1 Samuel 4:19-22. What do you think the author of 1 Samuel was trying to teach by including info about Ahijah's family?

- How should you proceed when you realize that you haven't been depending on God or even that you've been disobedient?
- Should you surround yourself with people who will tell you what you want to hear?

Surround yourself with advisers who depend on God and will encourage you to depend on Him too!

2. Jonathan: Courage, Faith, and Leading by Example

- Read Jonathan's plan to confront the Philistines again. What stands out to you about His plan?
- Was Jonathan certain that God would keep him safe? Did he lack faith?
- Is faith certainty about the specifics of what God will do in a particular situation? If not, what is faith?

Too often we are held back from faithful action in God's Kingdom because we have been wrongly taught that we should always expect guarantees from God regarding our success and our safety. Of course, sometimes God graciously deals with us by giving us some insight or assurance regarding what He is going to do. But sometimes, He simply wants us to trust two things: He wants to save, and nothing can stop Him. Sometimes, God wants us to exhibit courage by taking risks based on what we know of His character.

"It is as if Jonathan says, 'God can do mighty works with very small resources, and God may be glad to do it in this case; and how can we know, dear armor-bearer, unless we place ourselves at his disposal?'" - Ralph Davis

- What are some situations in which you know what God desires but acting is risky because He hasn't guaranteed your safety or success? How will you know what God will do unless you take that risk?

Jonathan teaches us that faith is trusting God's character, not a guarantee of our safety, and that the expression of faith requires the courage to act.

3. The Armor-Bearer: Courage in Following

- After seeing the difficulty and hearing Jonathan's impassioned speech, would you have followed him?

We know that God gives differing gifts to differing people. Maybe you don't feel like the fearless leader. That doesn't mean you can't be a fearless follower. Further, God has put us into partnerships for His gospel. In some, we may need to take the lead so that others are filled with faith to fight. In others, we may need to be the one who follows with support and encouragement.

- What are some ways that people "fearlessly follow" in a local church?
- Are there opportunities for you to be a fearless follower? Even if you're not taking the lead on something, how can you demonstrate the courage of the armor-bearer and be used in God's saving work?

Conclusion

Will you let disobedience, self-reliance, and fear keep you from willingly participating in God's salvation, or will you trust God and demonstrate the courage to take a risk? Will you allow fear of failure or of harm keep you from participating in the salvation that God wants to bring to others? Where is God pointing you to lead or to follow with all your heart so that He can save? Have you hesitated because you don't know what so few can do? Remember the speech of Jonathan: What can hinder the Lord from saving whether by many or by few.