

# Small Group: Pause Week 2

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## What you will need for this week:

> Bibles

## Suggested Structure:

> Opening game (see below)

> Open with question about whether anyone had any insights or comments about the sermon. (if you need it there is a brief summary of sermon at the end of this document)

> Discussion questions and prayer

## OPENING GAME

As you sit in a circle, present a scenario or encourage others to present the setting/scenario that will be the beginning of the story. For example: You are on a boat in the South Pacific. It is a beautiful day and.....

Go around the circle adding sentences to complete the story. (would be great if someone who types fast can capture the story and then read the whole thing at the end).

## GROUP DISCUSSION

Ask if anyone has anything to share from the Sunday message.

Someone read Jeremiah 17:5-8

5 Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength ... 7 "But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.

**In what ways do we trust in man more easily than in God?**

Saul essentially was a self-constructed man. He was determined to be great. And he worked hard at being great. Through determination, focus and hard work he accomplished a lot.

**How much does our workplace and culture applaud Saul's approach to life?**

We saw on Sunday that Paul was a God-reconstructed man. He had once been a self-constructed man but that all came tumbling down when he met Jesus. He handed over his life to Jesus completely. He allowed Jesus to rebuild him from the inside out.

**Does anyone have any stories of this being true in your life?**

Someone read 1 Samuel 15:10-23

<sup>10</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: <sup>11</sup> "I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the LORD all that night.

<sup>12</sup> Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal."

<sup>13</sup> When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions."

<sup>14</sup> But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?"

<sup>15</sup> Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."

<sup>16</sup> “Enough!” Samuel said to Saul. “Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.”

“Tell me,” Saul replied.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel said, “Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. <sup>18</sup> And he sent you on a mission, saying, ‘Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; wage war against them until you have wiped them out.’ <sup>19</sup> Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?”

<sup>20</sup> “But I did obey the LORD,” Saul said. “I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. <sup>21</sup> The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal.”

<sup>22</sup> But Samuel replied:

“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices  
as much as in obeying the LORD?

To obey is better than sacrifice,  
and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

<sup>23</sup> For rebellion is like the sin of divination,  
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,  
he has rejected you as king.”

### Someone read 1 Samuel 18:6-9

<sup>6</sup> When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres. <sup>7</sup> As they danced, they sang:

“Saul has slain his thousands,  
and David his tens of thousands.”

<sup>8</sup> Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. “They have credited David with tens of thousands,” he thought, “but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?” <sup>9</sup> And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David.

### Someone read Philippians 3:3-9

<sup>3</sup> For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup> though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

<sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in <sup>[a]</sup> Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

### Someone read Galatians 1:10

<sup>10</sup> Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Saul was motivated by self-glory. We see him building a monument for his own honour. He is so concerned that Samuel honoured him in front of his men. Paul on the other hand was motivated by Christ's glory. He is not so concerned with what people think of him. He sees fame and public praise as something entirely worthless and short-lived.

Saul is concerned with building his own kingdom. He wants to make a name for himself. Paul on the other hand is building Christ's kingdom. He wants to see Jesus' name lifted up.

**Think about your career, your hobbies, your family even, how easy is it to become like Saul and live for our own kingdom and glory?**

In his public world, Saul looked like he had it all together. But in reality so much of what drives Saul is insecurity, a deep drive to prove himself to those around him. He has sent down his roots into desert sand. There is a gaping self-deficiency in him.

*Paul on the other hand was driven on by Christ's sufficiency. He knew what it meant to be secure and rested in the love and acceptance of Christ. He knew the unconditional grace of Christ. Once he had worked so hard to prove himself in the*

field of religious leadership, but now he had nothing to prove. He was transformed by the love of Christ. His roots went down into a deep stream, a stream that nourished the depths of him.

**What do you think you can do more of to ensure you are driven by Christ's sufficiency?**

**What do you think you can do less of to ensure you are driven by Christ's sufficiency?**

We all have a basic choice: to trust in self, or to trust in Christ. Saul trusted in self, whereas Paul stopped trusting in self, and started trusting in Christ. When you compare these two men, you realize why trusting in self is insanity, and trusting in Christ is life at its best.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

Thank God for what he has been doing in our community over this year and especially in this series. Thank him for being more concerned with our roots system than what's on the surface.

Spend some time praying for each other. Over this holiday time, things can often slip out of routines and rhythms, and this can include our time with God. Pray that we will be driven by Christ's sufficiency more and more. Pray that this will be a season to pause and take the time to re-think and re-work our private self, the root system of our life.

People will be traveling over this time. Pray for safety for your group.

## SERMON SUMMARY:

There are two ways to live life: 1) We believe that indeed we do have what it takes, so we trust in ourselves, not God. 2) We believe that we don't have what it takes, so we trust God not ourselves.

This main point echoes something Smith Wigglesworth used to say: 'More of self, less of Christ. More of Christ, less of self.'

Just to clarify that when I say 'Don't trust in yourself', I don't mean, 'Don't get to know yourself, your likes and dislikes, your strengths and weaknesses.' That is not what I am saying. And I am not saying, 'Don't enjoy who you are.' Indeed, get to know yourself. Be yourself. Enjoy yourself. But don't put your hope in yourself. Rather put your hope in Christ.

Compare the lives of two people – Saul written about in the Old Testament, and Paul written about in the New Testament.

*Both of these men had much in common in their public lives*

Both of them were born with an achiever-type personality. Both of them were highly talented, focused men, determined men. Both of them had a massive work ethic. Both of them were deemed as successful by people who knew them. Both of them were courageous pioneers: Saul was a pioneer of the monarchy in Israel. Paul was the pioneer of missions into Europe.

But that's where the similarities end. When you look deeper, at their private selves, at the root system of their lives they're chalk and cheese.

<i>Comparing...</i>	<b>Saul</b>	<b>Paul</b>
<i>What they trusted in</i>	Self	Christ
<i>What motivated them</i>	Self-glory	Christ's glory
<i>What drove them</i>	Self-deficiency	Christ's sufficiency
<i>Response to God's Word</i>	Obey when convenient	Obey by conviction
<i>Response to challenges</i>	Stress	Peace
<i>Quality of relationships</i>	Damaged relationships	Nurtured relationships

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Paul on the other hand was a God-reconstructed man. Paul had once been a self-constructed man. But that all came tumbling down when he met Jesus. He handed over his life to Jesus completely. He allowed Jesus to rebuild him from the inside out.

## **2) Compare what motivated these men.**

Saul was motivated by self-glory. We see him building a monument for his own honour. He is so concerned that Samuel honours him in front of his men. Paul on the other hand was motivated by Christ's glory. He is not so concerned with what people think of him. He sees fame and public praise as something entirely worthless and short-lived.

Saul is concerned with building his own kingdom. He wants to make a name for himself. Paul on the other hand is building Christ's kingdom. He wants to see Jesus' name lifted up.

Saul is consumed with impressing people. Paul on the other hand is consumed with impacting people. It doesn't matter what people think of him. What matters is what people think of Christ.

### **3) Compare what drove these men.**

In his public world, Saul looked like he had it all together. But in reality so much of what drives Saul is insecurity, a deep drive to prove himself to those around him. He has sent down his roots into desert sand. There is a gaping self-deficiency in him.

*Paul on the other hand was driven on by Christ's sufficiency.* He knew what it meant to be secure and rested in the love and acceptance of Christ. He knew the unconditional grace of Christ. Once he had worked so hard to prove himself in the field of religious leadership, but now he had nothing to prove. He was transformed by the love of Christ. His roots went down into a deep stream, a stream that nourished the depths of him.

### **4) Compare their response to God's Word.**

*Saul claims to trust and obey God's Word, but in reality he only obeys it when it suits him, when it's convenient.* The fact that he disobeys God's Word is the surest sign that he doesn't trust in God or his Word. *In contrast*, Paul's trust in God is manifest in his trust in God's Word. After all, you trust someone to the degree you trust their word. Paul immerses himself in the Word of God, believes its promises, obeys its instruction – not as a matter of convenience, but as a matter of conviction.

### **5) Compare their response to life's challenges.**

*Think of Saul's impatience.* He knew what he wanted and he wanted it now. It's what caused him to get in trouble with God in the first place. In fact if you compare him with Paul, the biggest difference is that it seemed success came to him too easily and far too quickly. His good looks, his height, his leadership abilities. It gave him a lot to trust in. But given enough time it all back-fired. Contrast that with Paul who wrote the very section of the Bible we read from a prison, waiting, waiting – yet still full of peace and joy. It seems that God slowed him down again and again, making sure that he would not trust in his own abilities but rather in Christ's.

*Think of Saul's stress-levels.* Saul lived his life stressed out. When you're trying to stay on top, and be the best, and you're running on the fuel of self, it gets really stressful. It is seriously taxing on your internal reserves, which are limited in supply. *In contrast* Paul was a man who knew God's peace. He knew lots of pressure, and he knew how to work hard, but he wasn't stressed out. He wasn't pressurizing himself. He was flowing of God's grace.

*Think of Saul as he tried to hold onto what he had acquired.* Once Saul had gained something, whether popularity or property, he was terrified of losing it. He needed to be in control. *In contrast* Paul knew God was in control, and he could relax in that. He wasn't propped up by his accomplishments and the approval of people, so when he lost these temporal things, it didn't throw him.

### **6) Compare the quality of their closest relationships**

Saul left a trail of broken relationships. It seems that he so focused on building his kingdom, he neglected his own family. And instead of trusting people close to him, he lived in suspicion of them. He also had serious anger issues, the anger we see erupting as he tried to spear

David twice. Then of course, he was competitive, and this meant he was always threatened by people who might outpace him in some way. This terrible combination of neglect, suspicion, anger and competition meant that he hurt a lot of people in his life.

Compare that with Paul, who year after year grew an ever-widening circle of people who loved him. Instead of neglect, he put in time and energy into nurturing these relationships. Instead of suspicion, he believed the best about them. Instead of anger, he was gracious and patient with people's shortcomings. And instead of competing with people, he invested in people and collaborated with people, hoping that they indeed would outpace him.