

THINGS TO STOP AND START

Stop Resisting and Start Submitting

1 Samuel 15:1–23

SEARCHING
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STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

“Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft,
and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols.” (1 Samuel 15:23)

This rebuke was spoken by the prophet Samuel to king Saul after Saul first failed to execute God’s command and then attempted to pass off his disobedience as compliance. Saul was more interested in impressing the people than with obeying God.

As Christians, we may live in a democratic republic, but our ultimate service and loyalty belong to one glorious, great, and otherworldly King. God’s kingdom is an absolute monarchy, in which we forfeit our “vote” and submit fully to His rule.

Sadly, we tend not to live that way. We just don’t want to give up our own sovereignty.

First Samuel 15:1–23 serves as a warning for us when we’re tempted to usurp God’s throne.



DIGGING DEEPER

It’s easy to get caught up in reasons *not* to strike up a discussion about what the Bible says about *submission*. It’s a controversial word, even in the church.

Though controversial, *submission* isn’t a dirty word. On the contrary, submission promises peace and security—strikingly unique in a world fraught with the shifting sands of relativism and caprice. Trusting in the everlasting, never-changing, compassionate God and accepting His direction for our lives looks like a daily, willing transfer of power out of our hands and into His. It looks less like a voting booth and more like a tiny, dimpled child’s hand, reaching up.

Have you ever watched a little child take the hand of his mother as they both approach a busy intersection? Cars zooming, lights flashing, chaotic traffic congesting the streets, he reaches out and clasps her hand to keep close, because he trusts her to read the road signs and anticipate the flow of traffic. He stays connected; he stops when she stops, moves when she moves.

Quotable

*Resisting God’s
will is never
appropriate
or acceptable.*

*Choosing to go our
own way is never
pleasing to God.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Psalm 103:13–14 says:

“The LORD is like a father to his children,
tender and compassionate to those who fear him.
For he knows how weak we are;
he remembers we are only dust.”

Our heavenly Father is tender and compassionate; we can trust Him. Submission to God is not begrudging, resentful resignation but childlike trust in a good and loving Dad, no matter the chaos that surrounds us.



Submission for Real Life

How would you teach the lesson of 1 Samuel 15:1–23 to different people in your Bible studies, small groups, or children’s ministries? You might be spooked by the idea of teaching the S word. Here’s some assurance: Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*: “Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee.”¹ People long to be connected to something bigger than themselves—it’s hardwired into our souls. We are hungry for the Bread of Life—and we can feed them.

Everyday life provides plenty of opportunity to apply principles found in 1 Samuel 15:1–23: when training leaders, parenting, teaching children, discussing ethics . . . there are several occasions to “feed the hungry” with the good nourishment found in this passage.

Here is an example of how to communicate the principles of the passage to apply to a specific group:

Parenting: Saul disobeyed by not completely annihilating the Amalekites as he was told. He only halfheartedly executed God’s will, which is to say, he failed to execute it at all. Samuel, as God’s representative, didn’t let partial obedience slide, nor did he accept any excuses from Saul, nor did he take a wait-and-see attitude to Saul’s decision. Samuel’s treatment of Saul’s sin is a master class in how to confront disobedient children. Here are some lessons to glean:

- Always be in conversation (through prayer) with God about your children, and don’t just react (1 Samuel 15:10–11).
- When your children disobey, give them a chance to explain themselves (15:15), to hear their motivation and give them an opportunity to be remorseful.
- Make sure you are specific and clear about what your child did wrong (don’t generalize and avoid bringing up past behavior), so that he or she understands why he or she is being disciplined (15:18–19).
- Discipline is ultimately about *discipling*. When you discipline your children for disobedience, make sure they understand the principles behind your response (15:22–23).



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Write down any additional parenting advice you garnered from the passage:



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Think of another group of people for whom you could teach/preach/write a study of 1 Samuel 15:1–23. Then write down the group you've thought of.

Listen to 1 Samuel 15:1–23 (many apps and Web sites have audio options). Narratives are great to *hear* as well as read. Jot down notes of what you observe (what does it say?) and how you interpret your observations (what does it mean?). Pay attention to characters, settings, parts of speech (conjunctions, verbs, etc.), and timing (how much time elapses during the narrative).



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Can you think of any present-day anecdotes that would help your audience connect Saul and Samuel's story with their own lives? Write down your illustration ideas here:

What Scriptures would help to illuminate 1 Samuel 15:1–23? For example, find passages that demonstrate Saul's instability; Saul's spiritual blindness; Saul's desire to be well regarded by the people; Samuel's ability to accurately hear and act upon the word of God; or other Scriptures pertaining to obedience being more treasured by the Lord than sacrifice. (You'll notice that whenever Chuck Swindoll preaches, he *correlates* one Bible passage with another. Correlation is when you compare Scripture with Scripture in order to amplify your understanding of a given passage. When you answer this question, you're correlating!)

Finally, write down the applications you want to teach your audience. Pray that God helps you to humbly serve your audience in your application points. Be specific.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Pray Isaiah 12:1–2 as an act of submission:

“I will praise you, O LORD!
You were angry with me, but not any more.
Now you comfort me.
See, God has come to save me.
I will trust in him and not be afraid.
The LORD GOD is my strength and my song;
he has given me victory.”

Endnote

1. Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, Book I, trans. E. B. Pusey, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3296/3296-h/3296-h.htm#link2H_4_0001, accessed January 31, 2017.



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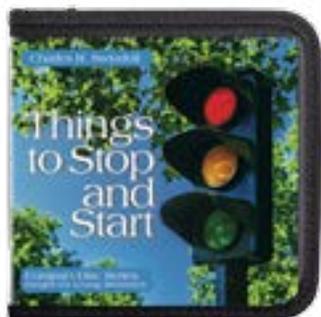
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For the 2017 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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