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It's a Matter of Principle

737-A

Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)



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It's a Matter of Principle

How many times have you encountered a difficult situation, forcing you to make a choice or decision, and have underscored it, either in your mind or vocally, with these words, “I had to do it. It was a matter of principle.” Or . . . “I couldn’t do that. It was a matter of principle.” For most of us, it is important to stand on our principles. The question is, “How do we know if they are our principles or God’s?” Dealing with the matter of principles will be our primary objective as we wind our way through the closing years in the life of the Living Legend of Samuel. Our passage is found in I Samuel 8, the entire chapter.

When we left Samuel in our last lesson, the children of Israel had returned at last to walking with God. At God’s command, they had returned to Him with all their hearts. They had put away their false gods. They had prepared their hearts. They were in the process of serving Him and Him alone. So God did what He promised He would do if they returned. He always does. He thundered from the heavens and defeated the enemy. Peace was returned to Israel. He even restored to them all the lands they had lost through disobedience. In I Samuel 7, the story concludes:

And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.
(I Samuel 7:15-17)

Samuel had a long and fruitful ministry among the people of God. Where once he had served them as a prophet, now he served them as judge. He was Israel’s final judge, bringing to an end an era of some 300 years of rebellion, repentance and restoration. It was a cycle that recurred with such profound regularity that a study of this period of Israel’s history at times seemed to be a repetitious replay of the same story. Only the cast of characters seems to change.

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Samuel's reign concludes that chapter of history, as he becomes the world's first circuit judge. He went from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpeh, settling disputes and enforcing the law as he went. He would then go back to Ramah where he lived and had his headquarters. From there he would rule Israel when he was at home. There he built an altar and taught his people how to worship. But Samuel, like God's other giants before him, had to come to the end of his ministry on earth. The work of God had to go on, but the man of God had to go on to glory, there to spend eternity at the feet of the King. Chapter 8 begins by bridging the end of Samuel's reign with the problems Israel faced, as it faced his departure.

And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba.

And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

(I Samuel 8:1-3)

So there appears on the horizon, an instant replay of Israel's dilemma a generation ago. Samuel, like Eli, had sons. One was named Joel and the other Abiah. Samuel, like Eli, had passed on to his sons the mantle of spiritual authority. Like Eli's sons, Samuel's boys walked not in the ways of their father. Money had become their god. Bribery had become a way of life. Justice was perverted at every turn. But God did not judge Samuel's house the same way He had judged Eli's. I believe there are three basic differences that account for that.

1- Eli's sons did evil, the Scripture says, and he restrained them not. Eli made no effort to rebuke his sons for their outlandish behavior. This statement was not made concerning Samuel.

2- Eli's sons made a mockery of worshipping God. They turned the feasts into blasphemy by forcing the worshippers to give to them what was intended for Jehovah.

3- Eli turned the mantle of spiritual leadership over to his sons knowing they were unbelievers. It was clearly recorded that they knew not the Lord.

So there were differences in degrees to be sure, but Samuel had a problem that paralleled Eli's. His sons walked not in his ways. But that was only the surface problem. God, you remember,

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was not baffled by voids in leadership. God always had a man. Samuel was proof of that principle. The deeper problem is what is at stake here. It is called the crisis of conformity. It involved how God's people would respond to their absence of leadership, and it wasn't good. Let's look on to verse 4 of chapter 8 -

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together,
and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk
not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the
nations. (I Samuel 8:4,5)

So the Jewish leaders called a summit conference and together they made a trip to Ramah to confront Samuel with their demands. First, they told him two things he already knew. Their opening line was, "Behold, thou art old." He must have greatly appreciated that stirring bit of news. I know I do when I hear it. But this startling statement was followed up by a second equally obvious declaration, "Thy sons walk not in thy ways." This, too, was no big surprise to Samuel. But the clincher was this, "You are old, your children are in rebellion; therefore, we want a king. We want a king like all the other nations have. We have a problem and the world has the solution. Just give us a king and we will be just like them." You see, the problem was that God did not want His people to be just like them. In verse 6 we read this:

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a
king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of
the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not
rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not
reign over them.

According to all the works which they have done since the
day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day,
wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods,
so do they also unto thee.

Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest
solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king
that shall reign over them. (I Samuel 8:6-9)

So Samuel was not at all impressed with the unanimous recommendation of the horde of elders, and he did what all godly men do when they are confronted with problems in their ministry. He prayed to the Lord. The Lord quickly assured Samuel that the people were not rejecting him, they were rejecting God. Their desire

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was that God might not have dominion over them. God reminded Samuel, "Look what I have done for them and then look how they have rejected Me. You are just getting the backlash, Samuel. The real rejection comes back to Me." God added, "Do what they say, but first warn them about the price they are going to have to pay if they demand a king." So Samuel gave the people this glowing report of what big government would do for them.

And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.

And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.
(I Samuel 8:10-18)

Here is Samuel's answer, "I'm going to give you what you are asking for, but you don't understand what you are asking for. I'll give you a king and here is what he will do. He will draft your sons into the cavalry. He will make some of them horsemen, some of them chariot drivers, and some of the special ones will get to run out in front of the king in battle. Some will be privileged to serve as laborers in the field. Some will get to work in munitions factories. Some will get to work in chariot factories. Your daughters can become bakers or cooks or perfume makers. He will take your best land away from you and make it government property. He will take 10% of all you have and all you make in the form of

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taxes. You will, in essence, become his slaves. This king you ask for will oppress you. When he does, you will cry to the Lord, but God won't listen when you do, for you will only have what you asked Him for."

The Jewish elders paid no attention to Samuel's graphic description of life under the world's kind of government. Let's continue,

Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel;
and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king
may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

(I Samuel 8:19-20)

Here we have the crux of it all. "We want a king," they cried, "so we can be like them. He will make our decisions. He will lead us into battle. He will fight for us. We want a king so we can be like them."

And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he
rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.

And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and
make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel,
Go ye every man unto his city.

(I Samuel 8:21,22)

Samuel had gone back to the Father and talked it over. God said, "We told them the truth, and this is what they want. This is what they get. Send them home and we will send them a king." Send them a king He did. In the future, we will look at the process and the person. For the remainder of this lesson, however, we are going to look at the principles that unfold as we prepare to close the book on the Living Legend of Samuel.

First, let's go back and look at the issue of principles. In reality, this Christian life we live is all a matter of principle. What is a principle? When you say, "I can't do that, it is a matter of principle or it is against my principles," what are you saying? Here is a definition of a *principle*: *a standard behavior based on a conviction of what, to you, is either right or wrong*. So when you say something is against your convictions or principles, you are basically saying the same thing, except that the principles are, in essence, the behavior patterns that result from your convictions. You may have a conviction that lying is wrong. I trust that you do. Therefore, you have to violate a principle if you lie to get something, even something you know you deserve. So what is a *scriptural*

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principle? A scriptural principle is God's standard of behavior for His children based on what the word says is right or wrong.

Now some of you may have figured out by now that the basic purpose or format of these studies is to teach scriptural principles so that you can take them home and apply them to your life in the day to day decisions you have to make. There are several things we need to understand about scriptural principles. So before we scan this lesson to look for principles to work into our lives, perhaps it is more important, first of all, to go through the process of learning how to find scriptural principles in our own daily time with God. We need to understand what they are and how to find them. So here are some principles about God's principles. These are important because if you learn these facts about principles, you can begin to see the word come alive in an increasing manner in your own study.

1- Principles take over where the commandments leave off. You say, "I don't understand." Let's say that you are counseling someone who is single. They want to know the will of God about dating or developing a relationship with Suzie. You and they have looked in a concordance under "S" for "Suzie" and found no such listing. Now what? The Scripture won't tell you whether or not to date Suzie. He may say, "But I like her. She is pretty. She is intelligent. She likes me. She is just not a Christian".

So often young people cry out, "If I just knew the will of God," when they *do know* the will of God. God gave it to us in the form of a principle. It is called the principle of unequal yoking. Within the parameters of that principle, you have freedom to choose. But if you violate that principle, you leave the will of God. God may not have told you in His word, "Don't buy a 1997 Chevrolet;" if He did, it is not in my Bible. I don't even think General Motors was around then. But He clearly gives us principles of financial freedom in Scripture about borrowing, about buying, and about Scriptural priorities for your life. You must apply those principles to your decision, and provided no principles are violated, you can decide what car to buy. But, if you have to violate a scriptural principle to buy it, don't do it. Find a cheaper car. Ride the bus or sell your boat. Do whatever you have to do. Stay within the parameters of the word and what you know is the will of God. He has given us principles regarding finances, regarding marriage and divorce, regarding running a business, regarding child rearing, discipleship, friendships, management, jobs, etc. He has not

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given specific commandments in many cases, but He has given us principles or parameters of behavior based on the convictions of the word. If you learn to find the principles, you will learn to live in victory.

2- Principles are often revealed in the Old Testament as portraits, and are confirmed in the New Testament as reality. So to get the rich, true deeper shades of meaning, you must study the Old Testament and look for principles. Remember that the old Testament portrays truth by illustration and the New Testament reveals truth by confirmation. Again, this unequal yoking passage is found in I Corinthians 6. In and of itself, it says all that needs to be said. But as an interesting backdrop, once you have read it, go back and read Deuteronomy 22:10. There God commands the Hebrews never to plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together in the same harness. Then you can watch the progression of Hebrew history where the Jews were told never to intermarry or be yoked together with the heathens round about them. Watch God explain what would happen if they did. Then watch them do it and watch it happen and watch the results. Now go back and read I Corinthians 6 about unequal yoking, and it will come alive. You will see the principle emerge with clarity. The Old Testament is a treasure house of portraits of principles to live by.

3- God teaches principles progressively through repetition, repetition, repetition. As we have journeyed through the land of legends, each story, each legend and each life has been dramatically different, but the same principles have kept emerging again and again and again. Often they have been progressive in nature, like the layers of an onion, each life revealing a slightly different truth or coloring a new facet of the same principle. But so often, the basic principles are the same. Again and again the same ones surface. Do you ever wonder why God keeps telling us the same things over and over and over again? The only thing I can conclude is that maybe He is waiting for us to get it. At any rate, God's principles unfold for us in progressive repetition, line upon line, precept upon precept.

4- Remember that in the Old Testament, God often reveals nationally what in the New Testament He applies personally. We can watch Him deal with Israel and know how He will deal with us. In I Corinthians 10, Paul is talking with the Christians in Corinth. He uses the Hebrew nation as a backdrop or illustration of how God deals with disobedience. He says,

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Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

(I Corinthians 10:1-14)

Paul is saying that the Old Testament is God's picture book of principles. Observe the drama of Israel and Jehovah and you will find the secrets of living the victorious Christian life.

5- Read the book of Proverbs. It is God's textbook of principles.

It builds a bridge from the portrait to the person, from the Old Testament to the New. It even says of itself that it will make you wise and show you how to live. The book of Proverbs is the book of principles.

6- The essence of all principles is application. You can learn some forms of doctrine, and they will only change the way you

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think. But if you come to understand the basic principles of Scripture, they should change the way you live. You will not only believe, you will behave, because a principle is a conviction based on what God says is right or wrong.

Now with this understanding of principles and their purposes, let's go back and look at I Samuel 8. Let's see if we can find some basic principles of life oozing through its pages, bringing life to light so that you and I may be different because of Samuel. There are a lot of them here, but I will only give you eight. There are many more than that in this one chapter. The key is not just that we learn these principles, although that is important, but the key is that we try to learn how to find principles every place in the Word we look.

The first principle surfaces in verses 1-3. There we read this -

And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba.

And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

(I Samuel 8:1-3)

1- The principle of spiritual succession. Christianity, you see, is not a self-perpetuating kingdom. It is a God-perpetuating kingdom. Psalm 75:6-7 reminds us that God puts up one and lets down another. The pages of scripture are lined with one liners that simply say, But his sons walked not in his ways, or His sons did that which was evil in God's sight. The pages of Christian history are marred with efforts to self-perpetuate a name or a heritage or a ministry by keeping it in the family. Churches have died. Organizations have died. Work has died. You don't make Joe's boy a deacon because Joe was a deacon. The principle is this - only God can perpetuate a ministry. Don't try to keep it in the family, except in the family of God. Both Eli and Samuel's greatest sins were not that their sons had failed but that they failed by placing their sons in positions of spiritual authority when they had no spiritual maturity.

2- The principle of vacated authority. Watch Moses when he disappeared to the mountain top and stayed a day or two too long. He came back and the people had panicked. Now look in 1 Samuel, as the elders call an emergency meeting. It was not

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a prayer meeting, but a business meeting. That was their first mistake. I believe if more of our meetings were prayer meetings, our business meetings would be different. Anyhow, the elders panicked as they often do when there is no leadership. Satan can make giant inroads when leaders change. If you are in an organization or a Bible study or a church and you have just lost your leader, be careful. Don't get in a hurry. Let God be your leader for a while. That may be why He took the one you had. Then let Him replace the leader with His man or His woman. It may be the one you would least expect. It often is. But let Him do the choosing. You must. It's a matter of principle.

3- This is the principle of the crisis of conformity. It surfaces in verse 5 and again in verse 20. One of God's biggest problems throughout history has always been teaching His children that they had to live in the world but not be of the world. Do you remember Jesus praying in John 17?

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world,
but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil (one).

(John 17:15)

“In” the world but not “of” the world has become the by-word of the church for generations. But Satan's lie is so subtle. It goes like this - “If it works for the world, it will work for the church”, and “If you are going to win them, you've got to join them”. Down through the ages, again and again God's people have bought that lie. They did not need a king. They already had one. God wanted to be their king. He had never failed them and He never would. But His ways are higher than our ways; as much higher, Isaiah says, as the heaven is above the earth. Now heaven and earth are not ever going to collide. They are too far apart. Neither are you ever going to merge God's ways with man's ways. They are just too far apart. They wanted a king so that they could be conformed to all the nations that surrounded them. Paul understood that,

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed
by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that
good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

(Romans 12:2)

What two words are used in contrast in that verse? There are two things pitted one against the other — transformed and conformed. You cannot have both. Man wants desperately to conform. He looks for things others do or wear, and if they mean acceptance, he'll wear them, too. It may be something as simple

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as the Izod alligator. It is a typical emblem of conformity. Alligator shirts, alligator sweaters, alligator jackets are the rage.

If some of us get any more alligators in our closets, they will smell like a swamp. But you know what? You can wear alligators on your pajamas if you want, but it won't change who you are. It won't make you any different. It will just make you more acceptable, because you have conformed.

There was a time when businessmen had to wear suits and ties to conform. Everyone looked alike. Now that is being replaced with the "dress-down" look. Blue jeans and tennis shoes are now the "in" thing. So now people who would rather be wearing suits and ties are dressing like they're going to a rodeo, because it's the thing to do.

The driving force behind the natural man is conformity. That is why the driving thrust behind man's philosophy is acceptance; peer acceptance and self-acceptance. These are the two words we hear over and over and over. Accept yourself and let others accept you. Conformity leads to acceptance and acceptance leads to conformity. Unfortunately, many times today the church is seeking acceptance by conformity, too, trying to out-build the world, out-educate the world, out-publicize the world, and out-organize the world. My friend, we will never beat the world at its own game. This is the enemy's turf. He wrote the rules. But we can out-love the world. We can out-give the world. We can out-live the world. We can change the world, if we do it God's way. We don't need a king, we have one. He rules from the throne room of the heart and of His kingdom there shall be no end. So we don't have to conform. It is a matter of principle.

4- The fourth principle surfaces as Samuel is faced with rebellion in the ranks. What did he do? He said nothing and he did nothing until he prayed. (Verse 6) If every Christian leader, every Christian parent and every Christian teacher would learn the principle of responding to rebellion with prayer and letting God take over instead of the flesh, oh, the difference it would make in our society. Follow the life of Moses. He wrote the book on this one. The more they rebelled, the more he prayed. To him it was matter of principle.

5- It is the principle of rejection of authority. (Verse 7) In a nutshell it is this - when God ordains authority and man rebels against that authority, God takes it very personally. Here is what

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He said, They have not rejected thee, Samuel, they have rejected Me. In Numbers 14, Moses said virtually the same thing. In Romans 13, Paul is saying the same thing. We have to be careful not to abuse that principle, but in its proper perspective it says,

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. (Romans 13:2)

This is a vital principle to use in counseling. It sets men and women free in Christ. It sets them free to obey. It is a matter of principle.

6- The principle is this: At the root of all rebellion is the issue of authority. It is also found in verse 7, where God outlines man's basic problem. It was Satan's basic problem, too. "They do not want Me to reign over them." In other words what He is saying is: "Here is the basic cause of all the conflict in the world. Man wants to be his own god." Man rejects the Lordship of Christ because it means that he must submit to another's authority. Understanding that principle will make a difference in how you teach, how you counsel, and how you deal with children. It is basic, but it is essential because it is a matter of principle.

7- This principle is the principle of accountability. It very simply says that you cannot be responsible for another's choices, but you are responsible to give them the truth and tell them the consequences of the choices they are about to make. It is found in verses 9-18 where we have a perfect explanation of what the government would do for the people. God said, "Samuel, I will give them their king, but first you tell them word for word what is going to happen if they make that choice, so that when the consequences come, they have a frame of reference that leads them back to their own decision, rather than blaming it on Me." What a profound principle to use in child rearing or disciple-making or counseling. Quietly tell them the cause and effect of their decisions. Within safe parameters, let them make their own decisions and see what they will do. Let them see that we really do reap what we sow. It might also be called the trumpet principle in Ezekiel 33. There God tells Ezekiel, "Your job is to blow the trumpet, and their job is to heed the trumpet. If you don't blow it, their blood is on your hands; but if you do and they don't listen, their blood is on their hands." Whatever you call it, the issue is the same. Tell them what will happen, and let them decide. It's a matter of principle.

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8- This is the principle of answered prayer. It says that just because God gives you what you asked for, it does not mean that it is what you needed. You may have given Him no choice. Sometimes He gives you your request and sends leanness to your soul. You get what you wanted, but lose what He wanted you to have in the process. It wasn't God's will for them to have a king. But they weren't looking for God's will. They were looking for a king. Have you ever prayed like that? God said in verse 22, "Listen to their voice, give them a king." He answered their prayer, but not according to His will, because they had not prayed according to His will. That is why praying for circumstances or signs is so dangerous. If you pray for a sign, God may give you a sign, but it may not be what you needed. You may pray for money and God may give you money. But what if it would be best for you if He actually took away your money to give you more of Himself? Don't badger God to do it your way. Learn to pray, "Thy will be done." You may be asking for a king when a king is the last thing you need. Remember that God said, "I will give them what they asked for if they insist, once I have told them what will happen. But while they are reaping, I will respond with silence." Beloved, learn to pray God's way. It is a matter of life and death, and it's a matter of principle.

There we have 8 principles from I Samuel 8. I know that we only touched the surface because our goal was not to major on these principles, but to learn rather how to find principles and how to live our lives according to the principles we have found. In the last lesson of this series we will go on to chapters 9 and 10. I would like to ask you to read those chapters this week to see for yourself what principles you can glean that will change your life in the week to come. That is why we study the Living Legends, that through God's picture book of principles, the Old Testament, our lives might be transformed into a more perfect reflection of His. I would like to challenge you to practice discovering the principles of Scripture. You may want to begin cataloging them so that you can go back and find the will of God in a certain area when you have a decision to make. Your decision will be clearer when you can clearly say, "That's what I have to do. I know it because it is a matter of principle."

One last thing. The key principle is the "crisis of conformity". Usually when you study a passage like this and a number of principles have surfaced as they have here, you can apply the

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particular ones that meet a need in your life or ministry. But from them, there usually emerges one key principle around which the others find their meaning. You need to learn to look for that key principle. It will tie all of the other ones together for you. I believe in this passage, the key principle is the “crisis of conformity”. You see how it works. God’s people fumbled when they lost their leader. They panicked and rebelled against authority. They wouldn’t listen to the trumpet of warning. They got what they asked for and lost what God wanted for them. It was all because their eyes were on the world. They were caught up in the crisis of conformity. That violation resulted in all the rest. The crux of their crisis is found in verse 20. Listen to what they said. They gave three reasons for demanding a king:

That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king
may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

(1 Samuel 8:20)

Their reasons were simple. They were just simply wrong. First of all, they weren’t satisfied with being different. They didn’t mind belonging to God so long as nobody could tell. They wanted to look like, act like and even smell like the world. They wanted to wear their Izods so nobody would know. They dressed like the world. They watched what the world watched. They wanted to go where the world went, and use the world’s language, the world’s psychology. They wanted to be the underground church for the wrong reason. That is what they became. They became powerless because no one could tell the difference. The problem was and the problem is that you can’t merge light with darkness. The shadows will overtake you. The church of Jesus Christ must return to its decidedly different position, marching to a drummer whose ways are so much higher than the world’s ways. They are as much higher as heaven is above the earth.

Secondly, the Hebrews wanted a king because they wanted him to judge them rather than God. They wanted to make their own rules because God’s were too old fashioned and strict. They wanted man’s laws to replace God’s laws, so that instead of reaching up for His standards, they could create new standards they could meet in the flesh. Believers today are still trying to take the world’s standards of morality, the world’s standards of honesty and the world’s standards of purity and fashion for themselves a king. Instead of being markedly holy, they can rest their case on being slightly holier than their unbelieving friends. But God has called

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us to be holy as He is holy. As the world's standards plummet, ours ought not to move an inch.

The last reason they wanted a king was so that they would have someone else to fight their battles. They wanted someone else who would meet the enemy on his terms. They wanted a king to compromise and co-exist, so they could minimize the warfare. That is the way the world reasons, even today. It is a “peace at any price” theology. God has called the Christian into battle; a battle man cannot win unless God fights it for him. There can be no compromises, no peaceful coexistence with the enemy for the Christian, but rather, hand-to-hand, head-to-head combat, because the glory of God is at stake. Slight compromises often minimize warfare. You dodge fewer bullets when you are not on the front lines, but you never possess the land.

They wanted a king other than God, as though any other king could rule God's kingdom. They wanted the Christian life without the cross. That is what they wanted. So God gave them what they wanted, and they yielded to the crisis of conformity. They should have known better, and so should we. Why? Because it's a matter of principle.

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IT'S A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE

“Give us a king,” God’s children cried,
“Like the nations round about.
Give us a king to rule us!”
We heard God’s people shout.

“Give us a king like they have,
We don’t mind bearing Your name,
But give us no cause to be different,
We all want to be the same.”

“Give us a king to judge us,
Your laws are too strict for today.
Give us a king with standards of ease
Laws any fool can obey.”

“Give us a king to go forward
And fight the battles we fight.
A king whose name is Compromise
Who’d rather be peaceful than right.”

“Give us a king to lead us,
We will depend on his word.
We will trust the power of men,
And we won’t need the Lord.”

Quietly, softly God replies,
“If a king is what you demand,
I’ll give you the king you ask for,
But you’ll never possess the land.”

You don’t need a king, beloved,
The world’s ways do not suffice.
The only king you’ll ever need
Is one named Jesus Christ.

You need no king to fight for you
Or to your life arrange,
For it is a matter of principle
And the principles never change.

For Focus and Application

1- What did Samuel's sons do that made them ineligible for leadership? How did this parallel the picture of Eli's life at the end of his reign? What differences were there, if any?

2- Read I Samuel 8:6, and see if you can find a basic principle of spiritual leadership. What is it? Why do you think God allowed it?

3- There is a second principle found in I Samuel 8:9. God gave them what they asked for. What pattern emerges in the way He did that?

4- Take I Samuel 8:11-18, and paraphrase it. Put it in your own words, using terms and issues that parallel today's society. What were the people really asking for? What were they really getting? Why couldn't they see it? Can you draw parallels in the spiritual realm today?

5- Reread I Samuel 8:19,20, and see what three basic reasons surface for their rebellion. How do we respond the same way today when God seems to be calling us to remain different and separate?

6- See if you can define the term "principles". What principles have emerged in your own life in the last year that have caused you to make a decision a certain way? Were they based on your convictions or God's? How do we sometimes justify our principles as though they were God's, the way the Israelites did?

7- How do principles differ from commandments or absolutes? What is the relationship between the two? Does each principle have its roots in an absolute? Give some examples.

8- How does studying the Old Testament for principles illuminate the New Testament words of Christ and the apostles? Give examples.

9- Why does God repeat the same principles over and over? What does this tell us about effective teaching?

10-Review the eight principles listed on pages 9-13 of the lesson. Ask God to verify these principles by showing you other places in Scripture where the same principle surfaces. Remember the best confirmation of Biblical truth is the Bible itself, not what someone says about it. The word confirms itself over and over.

11- Take any one of the principles we've studied in this lesson, and ask God to apply it to your own life. Seek verses to memorize and meditate on that will flood your heart with truth and combat Satan when he attacks you in that area.

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