

(1 Samuel) Various Passages - Three Lives, Three Choices

by David Guzik

The sermon explores the pivotal choices made by Samuel, Saul, and David, emphasizing the importance of aligning our decisions with God's will.

Duration: 35:05

Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:10-13, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 4:12, James 1:22

Topics: "Personal Relationship", "Trusting God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of building a personal relationship with God when no one else is looking. He uses the example of David, who developed a deep connection with God while tending to sheep in solitude. The speaker encourages the audience to spend more one-on-one time with God, listening to His voice and cultivating a genuine relationship. The sermon also highlights the need to trust in God during difficult times, as demonstrated by Saul and his army facing an impossible battle.

Transcript

I'll call this message Three Lives and Three Choices. And one of the things that's been so precious to us about the book of 1 Samuel is how compelling its personalities are. When we see Samuel and Saul and David, we see people that are real.

You look at those people and as we take a look at their lives, you go, I know people like that. And you also say, I see myself in there also. It's so real, they're so compelling.

If there's anything that's so true about the lives of these three great men of the Bible, and I don't mean necessarily great in holiness, great in righteousness, because King Saul was not one of those. But still, he's one of the larger figures of the Bible. If there's anything compelling about these men, it's that they made significant choices in their lives.

What I want to do this morning is just take a little glimpse at each one of these three lives and look at one choice that they made. One turning point that had an influence for the rest of their lives. And I'm doing it because I think the issue of our own choices is very important for us.

You know, it means a lot that we are made in the image of God. I don't think there's anybody who understands all of what that means. But it means at least this.

One aspect of our being made in the image of God is that God has given us the right and the privilege of choosing. We make choices that affect our whole lives and our whole eternal destiny. Sometimes we're not very comfortable with that, are we? Sometimes we don't like this power of choice that God has given us.

Sometimes we don't like it because we make bad choices. Right? You make a bad choice. Oh Lord, I wish you would have just chose that one for me.

I didn't want that, Lord. I didn't want that. I mean, I wish you would have just overruled me, overwhelmed me on that.

Just taken it out of my hands. Every one of us can look back on our lives and look at a bad choice we wish we wouldn't have made and it makes us shake our heads. Lord, why'd you make me in your image? I don't know if I want this choice.

There's another reason, too. It's not just that sometimes we make bad choices. Even if we're making good choices, there's a pressure, there's a weight, there's a responsibility on us to make choices, isn't there? And sometimes we just get tired of that, don't we? Don't you wish sometimes you could just say, well, Lord, you make all the choices for me.

Or say to somebody, you make them all for me. And sometimes we think that way. You know, when a person is young and maybe not ready or desiring to make all the choices in their life, sometimes a good direction for them to go is to join the military, right? Suddenly you've got a lot fewer choices you've got to make in your life, right? What time should I get up in the morning? They'll answer that question for you.

You know, you don't stand in front of the closet, what am I going to wear today? What should I eat? What am I going to do? They've got it all planned out for you. In some ways, there's something comforting about that because we don't have to make choices. But friends, that's not real life, is it? Because even that soldier in the military, they have to make choices about their life before God.

They're going to carry weight for their whole lives and for eternity. Let's take a look at three different lives and three different choices. First, we're going to begin with Samuel in 1 Samuel 3. Now, I'm hoping that as we read these little bits here that it'll sort of flood your mind with memories of when we went through these passages of Scripture together and that you'll have a warm remembrance of it.

Look at it here, 1 Samuel 3, verse 10. Then the Lord came and stood and called us at other times, Samuel, Samuel. And Samuel answered, Speak, for your servant hears.

Ah, do you remember this one? Here's Samuel. He's a little boy, right? And ever since he was barely older than an infant, his mother and his father, out of love and devotion to the Lord, had dedicated Samuel to the unique service of the Lord. And so they took him down to the temple and they said, Mr. Eli, the high priest, this boy is yours.

He belongs to you. He's going to serve you at this temple. And Eli looked at him.

There's the boy, four or five years old. And he goes, well, we can put him to work doing something here. You can open up the doors.

You can unlock the place in the morning. You can pick up trash. You can trim the candles.

Whatever, whatever little boy could do. And as the years went on, Samuel got older and older, but he was still a young man in the temple of the Lord. And we don't know what age he was when this took place.

I'm guessing maybe 10, 11, 12 years old. But one night Samuel goes down to bed and as he's sleeping, he hears a voice, Samuel, Samuel. He wakes up and he looks around.

Nobody's there. It must be Eli, the high priest, calling me from the other room. So he jumps up out of bed, runs into Eli.

Says, here I am, Eli. Eli wakes up from that foggy kind of sleep that old men sleep in. And he says, hey, I didn't call you, kid.

Go back to bed. Samuel goes back to bed, closes his eyes. Samuel, Samuel.

Well, this time it's Eli for sure. Runs in. It wasn't Eli.

Eli says, I don't know what you're talking about. It's probably the Lord speaking to the kid. So he says, okay, you go back down, lay down again.

And when you hear the voice again say, speak, for your servant listens. And that's exactly what he does here in verse 10. The Lord came and stood and called at another time, Samuel, Samuel.

And Samuel answered, speak, for your servant hears. Okay, here's the big message that God's been trying to call little Samuel to. And it says there in verse 11, Then the Lord said to Samuel, behold, I will do something in Israel at which both the ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.

Wow, that's pretty exciting, isn't it? I mean, this is news so great that everybody's going to hear it. Wow, tingling ears all over the place. Well, tingling, not in a good way.

More like burning with fire when you consider the rest of the message. Look at verse 12. And that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house from beginning to end.

For I have told them that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile and he did not restrain them. And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever. How would you like that to be the first message that God gives you? So you can just imagine little Samuel laying down on the bed after hearing that.

Saying, no, that wasn't the Lord. I'm not telling Eli that. It must have been my own imagination.

It wasn't the Lord. No, it had to be the Lord. No, it wasn't the Lord.

No, it wasn't. All confused. I love the Bible.

I love the way it's written. You know, the more you read it, the more you understand, the richer it becomes. Look at verse 15.

So Samuel lay down until morning. Don't you love that? It doesn't say he slept. Because you know he didn't sleep a wink.

You know, maybe that thing happened at 11 or 12 at night. So the rest of the night he's just lying with his eyes wide open. Run through his head, what am I going to do? What am I going to say? I don't know what to do.

So he gets up in the morning at the first crack of light. He says, I may as well get up now. He gets up, his eyes are all bloodshot from not sleeping a bit all night.

And he goes and he opens up the temple as was his practice, as was his duty. He just gets about his business, hopes nobody will bother him. But it says there in verse 15, And Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision.

Well, I imagine he was. Eli was the high priest of the nation of Israel. Eli was the man who stood before the Lord and the most holy sacrifices that they would perform.

Eli was the head of the spiritual direction and character of the whole nation. Verse 16, Then Eli called Samuel and said, Samuel, my son, and he answered, here I am. And he said, what is this thing that the Lord has said to you? And he said, if you hide it from me, please do not hide it from me.

God do so to you. And more also if you hide anything from me of all the things that he said to you. What would you do if you were Samuel in that situation? Maybe out of intimidation.

Maybe out of fear. Maybe out of a misguided sense of kindness. You just kind of glance up at Eli and say, Well, Eli, the Lord says he's got some things to talk to you about.

Why don't you talk to him about them? Or, Eli, you know the Lord? Well, I guess you've done a few things that God wasn't very happy with. Why don't you talk to God about them? He doesn't. Look at what it says there in verse 18.

And this is the choice that Samuel made. Then Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Realize what a heavy thing that was for a boy 10, 11, 12 years old to do? Samuel chose to respect God instead of fearing man.

It was more important to Samuel to be pleasing to God than it was to be popular before man. I mean, here he was. He was faced with this situation.

Am I going to do what's pleasing to this person? Or am I going to do what I know is right before God? And Samuel said, I'm going to do what's right before God. I believe that everybody who has it in their heart to be a follower of Jesus Christ is going to face this at some time or another. And you'll probably face it repeatedly.

The challenge, what's more important to me? Popularity among people or being right with my God? Friends, it's a heavy thing for us to face, isn't it? You're going to face it sometime or another. Maybe some of you are right here in the midst of it right now. You know, it's a time when the students are going back to school, isn't it? Isn't that where a lot of us have faced that kind of pressure? Am I going to be popular among people? Or am I going to be a servant of Jesus Christ, sold out to His goods, sold out to His purposes? It's a very, very heavy issue for us.

Now, there's a funny way that sometimes people take this principle. They take it in a wrong way. A way that's marked by pride.

Maybe a touch of arrogance. The way that some people take this is sort of an attitude that says, Hey, you can't say nothing to me. I just listen to God.

And when you see that kind of attitude, it's unfortunate. It's a warping of this precious principle, isn't it? It's a warping of this principle when instead we should be able to say, Listen, I'm going to serve the Lord and I'm going to do it instead of caring about the popularity of man. But never in an arrogant, proud, self-seeking way.

I want you to look at verse 18 here and notice what it says. The end part of the verse gives Eli's response. It says, And he said, It is the Lord.

Let him do what seems good to him. Isn't that interesting? How did Eli respond? With understanding. I imagine that Samuel was afraid.

He says, Oh man, I'm going to tell Eli this. And when Eli hears this, he's going to say, Are you saying this to me, kid? Let's remember who you are and who I am. You've got no right to talk to me this way.

Samuel probably expected to be rejected, but he wasn't. No, Eli said, I know this is of the Lord. Haven't you ever found that to be true in your own life when you've made a stand for the Lord and not been concerned about the popularity that you might have or not have in front of other people? You find out when you make this stand for the Lord that people will respect you for it.

It doesn't turn out as bad as you thought it would. You know, you thought they'd hate you. You thought they'd be throwing rocks at you.

And instead, you make a stand for the Lord and there's something in it that they respect. They say, Well, listen, I may not agree with this person and everything, but there's somebody standing up for what they believe. You know, Samuel found out that it wasn't such a big deal before Eli, that Eli took it seriously.

I want you to notice the next verse, verse 19, because I think this is critical. It says, So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and let none of his words fall to the ground. In other words, this choice that Samuel made to tell the truth and to respect God instead of fearing man, this was something that established a course in his life, a direction for him to follow.

And as he went on this direction, you see it's just confirmed over and over in his life. You see Samuel, a prophet, bold enough to get in the face of a king. A king who has armies, a king who has authority, a king who could say, Arrest this man.

Samuel doesn't care, he's a servant of the Lord. You find Samuel, a man who is so sold out to God that when he sees a wicked Amalekite in front of him, a man that was under a death sentence from God, and King Saul wouldn't execute that death sentence, Samuel would do it. It says he hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord.

You see this boldness, you see this thing, it was set in motion by this choice. I believe this instance right here in verse 18 where it says, Then Samuel told him everything. This was a watershed point in Samuel's life.

Would he be a man who would be a man pleaser or a God pleaser for the rest of his life? And he made that choice. Samuel chose to respect God instead of fearing man. We wish that every choice we saw in

this book would be a good example to us, but it's not.

You want an example of a bad choice, go to 1 Samuel chapter 13 and let's take a look at Saul. The first life and the first choice that we looked at was in the life of Samuel the prophet, but now we look at the life of Saul the king. Beginning at verse 1, 1 Samuel 13.

Saul reigned one year and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose for himself 3,000 men of Israel. 2,000 were with Saul in Michmash and were in the mountains of Bethel and 1,000 were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent away, every man to his tent.

And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land saying, Let the Hebrews hear. Now all Israel heard it said that Saul had attacked the garrison of the Philistines and that all Israel had also become an abomination to the Philistines.

And the people were called together to Saul at Gilgal. Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel. 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen.

And people as the sand which on the sea shore and multitude. And they came up and encamped in Michmash to the east of Bethel. And when the men of Israel saw that they were in danger for the people were distressed, then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes and in pits.

And some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal and all the people followed him trembling. This is an encouraging time for Israel, isn't it? It's terrible.

At this time the Philistines were much greater in military superiority over the Israelites. They had a huge military advantage. And Saul, just fired up by the Lord, went over and basically threw his son Jonathan.

He went over and he took this Philistine giant, this great army, and he kicked them in the shins. Then he ran away. And the rest of Israel went running to, what does it say there? Rocks, holes, pits, caves, thickets.

Some of them even went over to the other side of Jordan and said, we're going to put a river between us and the Philistines. We're scared. They've come out now with all their army, with all their chariots, with all their horsemen.

We're goners. We don't have a chance. We don't have a prayer.

And Saul goes, and if you look at it there at the end of verse 7, he's reviewing the troops and they're all trembling. And Saul looks, why are you guys all scared for? And Saul holds up his own hand and it's shaking too. They're all afraid.

So what do you do when you're up against an impossible battle? You trust in the Lord, don't you? They knew more than ever that they had to trust God. That if God didn't deliver them, then nobody else could. Nobody else would.

And so, look at verse 8. Then he waited seven days according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him. So Saul said, bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me.

And he offered the burnt offering. Whoa. You see, you remember this story, don't you? Remember the story and how it must have been that Samuel knew, the prophet, he knew that they had to honor God and offer sacrifices.

And so he tells King Saul, listen, you wait there until I come, and when I come, we'll offer sacrifices, and then we'll go out and we'll know that the Lord's behind us. And so Saul says, okay, Samuel, I'll wait. And so he waits a day, and Samuel's not there.

He waits another day. Where's Samuel? Three days, I'm a patient man, but I'm getting my patience tried. Four, five, six, seven days.

Finally, he says, I'm not waiting any longer. We got to go. The people are starting to scatter from me.

We got to do something. Bring out the bull. I'm going to sacrifice it.

And friends, this was a huge no-no. Big. Because Saul was a king, not a priest.

God established a very strict rule in Israel that priests were not to be kings, and kings were not to be priests. The kings ruled. They sat on the throne.

They directed the army. They ruled the nation. The priests, they served the Lord in the tabernacle, and they offered sacrifices to God.

And if you were a king, you weren't a priest, and if you were a priest, you weren't a king, unless you were the Messiah, Jesus Christ. God saved that designation for our Lord and Savior, didn't He? He was all prophet, priest, and king, and all three glorious offices in one. But now, Saul takes upon himself to do the work of a priest and offer sacrifices.

And so he carves at the bull. He makes the sacrifice. Oh, isn't the Lord pleased with us? Yes, we're sacrificing to the Lord.

Now look at verse 10. This is great. Now it happened, as soon as he had finished the burnt offering, that Samuel came.

Isn't that just how it works all the time? You know, you wait, you wait, you wait, you wait. Finally, your patience is exhausted. You're not going to trust in the Lord anymore.

You're going to go out. You're going to do it in the flesh. And then as soon as you do it, here comes God's answer.

But you've just blown it. Oh, Lord. Doesn't it show you something else, too, though? That you're going to be most sorely tempted to take it into your own hands right before the answer is going to come.

Well, Saul blew that test. It says, when Saul went out to meet Him, that he might greet Him. I love this in the original language, where it says he might greet Him.

He wanted to bless Him in a priestly way. Saul fancies himself quite the priest now. He says, oh, God bless you, brother.

You know what he's talking? Priest talk to Samuel. Now look at Samuel's answer here, verse 11. Samuel said, what have you done? Now, we've talked a lot about Saul so far.

I want you to know, I haven't even focused in on what I think Saul's critical choice was yet. Of course, Saul blew it. He chose to make the sacrifice, and that was sin, right? He blew it.

But that's not the critical choice I'm talking about. The critical choice comes in verses 11 and 12. Look where he says, and Samuel said, what have you done? And Saul said, here's the choice.

When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Mikmas, then I said, the Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord. Therefore, I felt compelled and offered a burnt offering. I don't know if you write in the margins of your Bible, but if you like to indicate or draw a little circle or make a little mark, this is one of the finest examples of lame excuse making that you ever find in the Bible.

You see what Saul says? This is the choice he makes. Saul chose excuses instead of God's heart. I mean, look at what he says.

Verse 11, and Saul said, when I saw that the people were scattered from me, in other words, hey, I'm starting to lose some people. I'm starting to lose some popularity. I mean, I can't fight without an army.

What's it going to be? Just me and God against the Philistines? Does that make sense? Yeah. I think God could do that. If you're right with God, He could do it.

Look at the next excuse he makes there in verse 11. And that you did not come within the days appointed. Ah, you love that one, don't you? What's behind that one? It's your fault, Samuel.

You know, tick-tock, if you were here, buddy, if you would have been here earlier, I wouldn't have had to do this. It's really all your fault, Samuel. And he goes on, verse 11.

And that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash. Then I said, the Philistines will now come down to me at Gilgal, and I've not made supplication to the Lord. In other words, he's saying, I thought about this, Samuel.

I didn't just go off, you know. No, no, no. No, I thought about this.

You know, I really considered this. And I went out. This was well thought out.

Yeah, it was well thought out sin is what it was. But he said, I at least thought about it. And he goes, I had to make supplication.

Listen, make all the supplication you want. Just don't offer sacrifices. That's the job of the priest.

It's not your job. Then finally, oh, the classic one is at the end of verse 12. It just doesn't get better than this.

Therefore, I felt compelled and offered a burnt offering. I had to do it. I felt compelled.

Oh, did you? You felt compelled. I suppose we could bring up for the next two or three hours an unbroken chain of people coming up here and giving testimony. Thanking God that he did not allow us to do some of the things we felt compelled to do.

You know, if we were given over to do everything we felt compelled to do, how many of us would be in jail right now? Would be dead right now? Would be in some mental institution right now? My friends, feeling compelled doesn't mean anything, really, does it? It means there's some strong feeling there, but friends, Saul's perhaps weakest excuse is that he says, therefore, I felt compelled and offered a burnt offering. You know, my friends, it's a heavy thing to choose excuses instead of God's heart. You know, it's sad that Saul sinned in offering the sacrifices, but I think the far greater sin in this was the excuse making and the failure to deal honestly with this before the Lord.

If Saul would have just changed his heart and said, No, Lord, I don't want this. Samuel, please forgive me. Samuel, please make atonement for me.

I'm sorry, but he didn't. And this hardened direction of Saul's heart continues on the rest of his life. All the rest of his life.

You see, it's nothing but excuses and dishonesty before man and before the Lord. And the Lord was going to deal with it severely. Look at it here in verse 13.

And Samuel said to Saul, You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God which He commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart. And the Lord has commanded Him to be commander over His people because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.

Saul, don't you see? If you won't come before the Lord and deal with this honestly, you're setting yourself in a direction where it's just going to be excuse after excuse. And friends, I don't know how God can deal with us sometimes with the excuses we make before Him. But excuses are a slippery thing, aren't they? So easy to see in other people.

So difficult to see in ourselves. I mean, you know how it works, don't you? You make lame excuses for your bad behavior. I have totally justified reasons for what I do.

Isn't that how we think? It's terrible. It's so hard to see it in ourselves. I think maybe we need to come before the Lord and pray a risky prayer, a dangerous prayer.

A prayer that would come before the Lord and just say, Lord, shatter every excuse in my life. Just break it down, Lord. Break down every excuse.

Give me no refuge in my excuses, God. The ones I can see, the ones I can't see. I don't want any refuge in them any longer, Lord.

Shatter them. Clear them away. Compel me to deal with you honestly, God.

It'd be a scary thing to pray, wouldn't it? But it'd be beautiful. We wouldn't end up like Saul. So Samuel chose to respect God instead of fearing man.

Saul chose excuses instead of God's heart. What about our third one? Well, you know who the third one has to be, right? David. Let's go to chapter 16.

You know, you think about significant turning points in the life of David, and there could be many. There could be several different turning points, but I'm going to pick one that might be a little more obscure in your mind, but I think it's nonetheless precious. First Samuel, chapter 16, beginning at verse 10.

Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, The Lord has not chosen these. Ah, you remember this one, don't you? Back when the Lord said, I need to pick a new king over Israel, Samuel goes out. One of the sons of Jesse is going to be the next king over Israel, and you're supposed to go and anoint him with oil.

So Samuel goes, and he meets with Jesse, and he says, Call all your sons together for a banquet. I'll tell you what I'll do as we go along. He didn't want to blurt out the news ahead of time, and so they all come together, and Samuel's looking over all of Jesse's sons, and he's saying, Well, Lord, you picked one of these guys to be the next king over Israel.

Which one is it? And his eyes fastened on a guy named Eliab. Oh, Eliab. He must have looked the part.

Tall, square jaw, broad shoulders. Samuel says, Oh, yes, good choice. You know what you're doing, God.

Excellent, excellent. Very, very good, Lord. This is the choice.

And the Lord says to Samuel, Samuel, I don't know what you're thinking. This guy isn't the one. Man looks upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

This is not the guy. So Samuel says, Oh, Lord, you know, you're right. I guess so.

Sometimes you like to choose a second born, don't you? Not the first born, Eliab. The second born, Abinadab. Yes, Lord, Abinadab.

Why, he's no slouch either. Look at him. He's a good looking guy.

He says, No, it's not him. Three, four, five, six, seven. The Lord says, It's none of these.

If you notice here, verse 10, Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, The Lord has not chosen these. Now Samuel has a problem.

The Lord just said it would be one of the sons of Jesse. And look, here they all are. And he thinks, Well, maybe they're not all here.

He asks, verse 11, Samuel said to Jesse, Are all the young men here? And then he said, Yeah, there remains yet the youngest. And there he is, keeping the sheep. Samuel said to Jesse, Send and bring him, For we will not sit down till he comes here.

One son of Jesse. So lightly esteemed that his father doesn't even call him by name. Just the youngest.

The kid. The baby. The punk.

That kid never had a brand new piece of clothing his whole life. Seven older brothers. King of the hand-me-downs.

And there he is. You know, just enduring all of this. And he's out.

They didn't even get invited to the dinner. Yeah, he's just out keeping the sheep. Bring him in here, he says.

Verse 12, So he sent and brought him in. And he was ruddy with bright eyes and good looking. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is the one.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. You might say, well, this is great.

Praise the Lord, but what's the choice? What choice did David make? I said this was a little bit obscure, but I think you can see that David made a choice. Where was David when he was called to be the next king of Israel? He was out keeping the sheep. And what kind of man was David when he was out there? I want you to know, God did not only pick David for what God could make of him.

God picked David for the kind of man he was right then. Because we read earlier in chapter 13, that God told Saul, I'm not going to have you, I'm going to go find me a man after my own heart. David, out with the sheep, was a man after God's own heart.

And what's the choice that I'm pointing to? Let me put it to you this way. I believe that David chose to love God when no one was looking. There he is.

There's nobody watching him, right? Everybody else is gone. There's David all alone out there with the sheep. They're loud.

They're ill-tempered. They smell. It's just David and the sheep.

And he chose to love God when it was just him and him with the Lord. Isn't that a critical principle in our lives? I'm so grateful that you all are here this morning. And I think the Lord wants you to be here.

Here you are. You're sitting. You've got your Bible open.

You're reading. It just cheers a pastor's heart. Nothing a pastor likes to see better.

He says, well, let's look at verse so-and-so. He sees everybody's head go down. It's great.

No, not that nodding head from the sleep thing. I'm talking about the, let's look into the Word thing. Oh, this is great.

They're here. They've got their Bibles open. They're into the Word.

This is great. But here's my question. That Bible that's open on your lap, is this about the only time that it's open all week? You can come in front of other people and get into the Word.

But do you love God when nobody else is looking? You know, you can pray together with everybody here. You can worship the Lord. But do you do it when nobody else is looking? And it's been said, and it's probably a pretty good definition, that character is what we are when nobody else is looking.

Well, what kind of relationship do you have with the Lord when nobody else is around? When nobody else is looking? Do you long to get in God's Word? Do you long to spend time with Him? Do you long to send your heart and your thoughts towards Him? Having a real relationship with God when no one else is looking, that builds the foundation for everything else in your Christian life. David had that. And it wasn't

just being alone.

I'm not just saying, are you at times when you're alone? You know, I believe that David probably picked up the job of being the shepherd in the family after all the other brothers had had it, right? I mean, the oldest would have it, and then when the next one was old enough to do it, he'd go, great, I don't have to be a shepherd anymore, now the second born gets it. And then the second born says, great, now I don't have to do it anymore, now the third born gets it. And up and up, until you're the final one, until the youngest son, and you get stuck with it the longest, don't you? But all those other brothers had time out with the sheep all by themselves, out under the starry sky, the beautiful sky at night.

You know what? It never made them men after God's own heart. But David was different. David had a heart that would sing those beautiful songs to the Lord, that would cry out, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Makes me lie down in green pastures, leads me beside the still waters. All those beautiful things. All those beautiful expressions of heart.

It came from the relationship that David built with the Lord when no one else was looking. So what kind of relationship do you have with the Lord when no one else is looking? You hear the Lord speaking to you softly, sweetly, tenderly to you, right now, not condemning you. Let's do more of that.

Let's spend more time, just you and me. You know how it works, don't you? Sometimes you can know somebody and feel fine with them in a group of people. You know, it's 5, 6, 7, 8 of your friends, you feel comfortable with them, it's great, you're having a wonderful time.

Then all of a sudden you find yourself one-on-one with a person in that group and you don't know what to say. It's fine with them in a group, but one-on-one, you don't have any kind of relationship. Maybe that's how it is with you and the Lord.

Maybe it didn't used to be like that. That's where you find it now. You know, this passion that David had to choose to love God when no one else was looking, do you see the strength that it built in his life, that this really was a watershed place in his life? I mean, it really affected everything else.

This was a choice that mattered. Friends, before you this morning, I just want to present to you three lives and three different choices. Samuel chose to respect God instead of fearing man.

Saul chose excuses instead of God's heart. And David chose to love God when no one else was looking. And I suggest to you that each one of those choices had a huge impact on the rest of their lives.

And what choices is God speaking to you about this morning? I don't know all your lives. I don't know the issues that the Lord is dealing with. But I know the Lord is speaking to you right now about choices.

May God move upon us to honor Him in every choice that we make. Say, Lord, shatter my excuses. Compel me to make those godly choices.

And then you'll grow and grow and find yourself shining ever more brightly in the image of the God that created you. Let's pray together right now.

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