

## April 9 — Misleading Lip Reading

### READ

1 Samuel 1:9-4:11

1 Samuel 1:12-14, *“Now it came about, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli was watching her mouth. As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. Then Eli said to her, ‘How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you.’”*

### THINK

Already ostracized for her inability to conceive, Hannah poured her heart out to God in prayer over her greatest desire — to birth a son. Although she prayed without saying a word, her powerful prayer cut through the silence and directly touched God's heart. But Hannah must have been pretty anguished because, despite her sincerity, she was misunderstood. Eli, the priest, accused her of being drunk! This simply showed his lack of discernment and inability to see the truth about Hannah.

Maybe there has been a moment in your life when you put God first, and people criticized and disrespected you for your decision to do so. While some choose to let the criticism stop them, leaders and influencers for Christ know that, through it all, God always stays true and blesses those who are faithful to Him.

The criticism of others faded as God's faithfulness took center stage in Hannah's life. He heard her prayer and blessed her with a child, Samuel, who would grow up to be a prophet and lead the nation of Israel. So, regardless of what anyone says, you're playing for an audience of one — God. And as long as you please Him, it doesn't matter who you displease. Stay focused!

### PRAY

God, Thank You for being faithful and showing me how I can learn from Hannah's confidence in You. You know me best. Help me keep my eyes on You in the face of opposition. Thank You for Your everlasting love and guidance. Amen.

## April 10 — #WeHaveAKing

### READ

1 Samuel 4:12-8:22

1 Samuel 8:6-7, *"But when they said, 'Give us a king to lead us, this displeased Samuel; so, he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him... 'It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected Me as their king.'"*

### THINK

Within our finite minds, we don't always know what's best for us. We want and ask for things that could be detrimental to our physical, emotional, or spiritual health out of a desire to fit in or achieve success according to the world's standards. And, sometimes, God gives us these things so we can discover for ourselves that it really wasn't the best for us.

The Israelites' social media was blowing up with #WeWantAKingToo. They failed to trust God's chosen leader and last judge, Samuel. Other nations all had kings, so why shouldn't they have one as well? This obviously hurt Samuel, so he lifted his frustration and anguish up to God -- who assured him that he shouldn't take it personally. They were really rejecting God as the King of kings — the best and most powerful King of all.

God obliged the Israelite's request, knowing they needed to learn from firsthand experience, even though it wasn't truly what was best for the nation. And his chosen people would soon find that having a human ruler wasn't all it was cracked up to be.

Popularity, success, knowledge, entertainment, material objects, and status symbols can all become ruling forces over us. Though not inherently evil, we can't allow them to displace God as number one in our lives. He is our one true King. No idol or human leader can ever compare. Our risen Savior reigns now and forevermore! #WeHaveAKing!

### PRAY

Lord, Thank you for reigning over my life. I don't want to be a slave to the world! You are sovereign, and I submit all that I am to You. Amen.

## **April 11 — But... Why?**

### **READ**

1 Samuel 9:1-12:25

1 Samuel 9:20-21, “‘...And I am here to tell you that you and your family are the focus of all Israel’s hopes. Saul replied, ‘But I’m only from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel, and my family is the least important of all the families of that tribe! Why are you talking like this to me?’”

### **THINK**

Billy Graham wrote that he would ask God one day why He chose a farm boy from North Carolina to preach His Word to the world. While he may have had an initial pause, he accepted that purpose and followed God’s lead. God worked through Billy Graham as he stood before millions and had access to world leaders, boldly bringing God’s Word to the world.

As we are introduced to Saul, we see him ask a similar question — “But...Why?” He was convinced Samuel had the wrong guy. He was just a guy looking for his father’s donkey. When the time came to go public with the announcement that he was indeed God’s anointed king of Israel, he heard people mocking him, and he hid behind a bunch of baggage!

Saul began as a reluctant king. Like many who step out into God’s purpose for their lives, he felt unworthy. However, it is in that place of humility that God can show His strength *if* we allow Him to use us.

Is God calling you out of hiding? The next time you feel called to serve God in a big way, don’t ask, “But... Why?” Instead, believe that if He believes in your ability, you must be qualified for the job through Christ. And then, ask a new question: “What next?” Be willing to step into His purpose and plan for your life, and experience the amazing things He can do in and through you.

### **PRAY**

Heavenly Father, Thank You for the purpose and plan You have for my life. I want to experience the excitement of You working through me. Help me to be courageous and be glorified in me. In Jesus ’name, Amen.

## April 12 — The Best is Yet to Come!

### READ

1 Chronicles 9:35-39

1 Samuel 13:1-14:52

1 Samuel 13:13-14b, *“How foolish!” Samuel explained. “You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you. Had you kept it, the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom must end, for the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart.”*

### THINK

We’ve all been there. We see something that we want now, something we think will solve our problems and make our lives fuller, easier. Then we realize we’ve made a mistake — God’s best was still coming.

In today’s reading, we see Saul skip a few steps. And really, who could blame him? The Philistine army was pressing in on all sides. His men were weaponless and fleeing in droves. Where was Samuel, the nation’s spiritual leader? It had been seven days, and he was nowhere in sight. Saul felt he needed to make a move, so he took matters into his own hands. He made burnt and peace offerings to God, despite Samuel’s previous instructions not to. In doing so, he not only sinned against God, but he also lost his future kingdom. God was looking for someone after His own heart, and Saul proved he was not the man for the job.

Have you ever been impatient like Saul? Maybe you acted out of fear, not trusting God to come through? Unlike Saul, we don’t literally have a prophet like Samuel giving us clear instructions — but we do have God’s Word. When we take shortcuts, we miss out on His best because His plans are always perfect and on time.

So, be patient. Seek to be a person after God’s own heart and trust that He will always come through, no matter the circumstances. His best is yet to come!

### PRAY

Dear God, As I head into this week, help me focus on what You desire for me and trust Your timing, knowing that You will always arrive according to Your perfect plan and purpose. I want to experience Your best! Amen.

## April 13 — Don't Pounce on the Plunder!

### READ

1 Samuel 15:1-17:31

1 Samuel 15:19-22, *"Why did you not obey the Lord? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord? '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. 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. 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...'"*

### THINK

In yesterday's reading, Israel's first king, Saul, grew impatient and lacked trust in God's timing, which led him to disobey God's command. Today, we find him up to the same old antics. And once again, he learned the hard way that partial obedience is still disobedience!

Saul was commanded to destroy all things Amalekite. But instead of fully obeying, he "pounced on the plunder." And then, when the prophet Samuel called him out for his disobedience, he made excuses — he passed the buck and blamed the soldiers, claiming they took the best of the livestock to sacrifice to God. Yet, what did Saul do himself? He allowed the enemy's king, Agag, to live. Although he regretted his wrongdoing, his lack of follow-through on God's command led God to reject him as Israel's king.

When God puts something on your heart, do it! Commit to following through completely! The cost of obedience may seem high, but the price of disobedience is always greater. Is there a stance you need to take? Don't waver from it! Will a Christ-centered decision potentially cause you to lose popularity or even face rejection? It's possible. Nonetheless, own your faith and stick to your beliefs — be known for it. When you fall short of fully obeying God, the plunder is never worth the price!

### PRAY

Father, I desire to be found faithful. Is there anything You're asking of me that I haven't followed through on? Please make this clear and give me the courage and strength to obey fully. Let no plunder pull me away from following You! Amen.

## April 14 — Facing Giants

### READ

1 Samuel 17:32-19:24

1 Samuel 17:37, 45-46: *"The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine. ... David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty ... whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands.'"*

### THINK

Most of us are familiar with the story of David and Goliath. David, a young shepherd, was the only one in all of Israel brave enough to take on the 9'9" giant, Goliath. Surely his heart was beating through his chest as he ran toward the battle line with a stone and slingshot in hand to face off with the seasoned warrior. Before the battle could commence, however, David had a few words of his own for the giant who'd been taunting the Israelites for forty days.

Notice in the reading above, David mentions Goliath's three weapons, but he didn't say, "I come against you with a slingshot in hand." No, he said, "I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty." What gave him such courage? David went historical. God had been with him when he killed a lion and a bear, and he knew that God would do the same in this battle. So, with a single stone, David hit Goliath, who fell facedown and died. David trusted in God with the seemingly impossible because he had seen God do the impossible before.

We all face giants. Rather than cowering before them — no matter what they are — the God of heaven's armies goes before us in battle. He gives us everything we need — healing, strength, courage — because He loves us. When we place our trust in God, He blesses our obedience. Today, let's live out the same faith and courage as David!

### PRAY

Almighty Lord, Thank You for always going before me into battle. I put my trust in You, knowing that You are greater than any giant I face. Amen.

## April 15 — A Friend Indeed

### READ

1 Samuel 20:1-21:15

Psalm 34

1 Samuel 20:4,42, *“Jonathan said to David, ‘Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do for you... Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord.’”*

### THINK

King Saul couldn’t handle the attention David received after killing the giant Philistine, Goliath. Women were literally singing his praises, saying, “Saul has killed thousands, and David his tens of thousands.” This sent Saul on full tilt — he wanted David out of the picture, he wanted him dead. But within this turmoil, we find a true, die-hard friendship between Saul’s son, Jonathan, and David. Jonathan was a devoted friend, despite his father’s wishes. He protected David and forewarned him of imminent danger.

It’s tough to find friends that go the extra mile for you. But when you get one of these rare gems in your inner circle, it’s one of the best gifts you could ever receive. You know you can count on them for anything. They motivate you to grow, genuinely care for you, and have your best interest at heart.

On the flip side, we need to be that loyal, trusted friend for others. When we sacrifice for others, it touches them to the core. By allowing the Holy Spirit to work in and through us, our relationships rise to a supernatural level. Such bonds are made even more incredible when we share a love and commitment to Christ.

Who is your Jonathan? Who protects you and stands by your side no matter what? Do you reciprocate with the same level of loyalty and encouragement? Cherish that friendship always. It is a gift from God, so give thanks!

### PRAY

Lord, Thank You for the gift of friendship and community. Help me to be the ultimate friend to others. May Your Spirit speak through me and into their hearts as we travel together. Amen.