

Sept 21/25 Small Group Guide & Leader's Notes

Based on 1 Samuel 11-12

Read 1 Samuel 11:12-15; 12:6-25

1. What stood out to you from Sunday's passage or sermon? Was there a phrase, image, or story that caught your attention?

Leader's Notes:

- This opener invites broad sharing.
- Encourage participants to share both head (what they noticed) and heart (what it stirred in them) responses.
- Look for recurring themes — often God highlights a common word for the group.

2. Tim described Saul's victory over the Ammonites as "the most dangerous moment" — not defeat but success. Why do you think success can sometimes be more spiritually dangerous than struggle?

Leader's Notes:

- Explore how ease can lead to self-reliance.
- Draw connections: financial security, career stability, health, relationships.
- Invite participants to share times when life was "going well" but they drifted spiritually.
- Encourage honest reflection without shaming — highlight the grace of God calling us back.

3. Samuel warns Israel not to turn to "empty things" that cannot save. What are some of the "empty things" people today put their trust in? Which of these temptations feel closest to home for you?

Leader's Notes:

- Common "empty things": money, comfort, status, beauty, relationships, personal competencies.
- Use David Foster Wallace's quote if helpful: "Everybody worships and the compelling reading for maybe choosing some sort of God to worship is that everything else will eat you alive."
- Push for specificity — how do these things show up in our daily lives?
- Be ready to gently redirect if sharing gets too abstract.

4. Samuel's speech is sharp, even jarring at a coronation. How might God's warnings actually be an expression of love?

Leader's Notes:

- Connect to parents warning children, doctors giving hard diagnoses, friends offering tough truth.

- Explore how God warns us not to shame but to protect.
- Invite reflection on moments where God's warning felt painful at first but proved loving.

5. After warning Israel, Samuel invites them back to covenant at Gilgal. What do you notice about the grace in this moment?

Leader's Notes:

- Highlight Gilgal's history: crossing the Jordan, first Passover, covenant renewal, Joshua's vision of God as warrior
- Stress that God doesn't abandon — he extends grace even after betrayal.
- Encourage group to consider: what does it mean that God includes even our "kings" (our wrong choices) in his covenant faithfulness?

6. How does Jesus' cross embody both the warning and the invitation Samuel gave?

Leader's Notes:

- Warning: our sin and idols lead to death.
- Invitation: at the cross, Jesus says, "Do not be afraid ... God is not giving up."
- Encourage participants to consider how the cross draws us into dependence — away from self-sufficiency, into surrender.

7. Where might God be inviting you to turn away from an "empty thing" and renew dependence on him this week?

Leader's Notes:

- Allow silence for reflection.
- Encourage concrete next steps (prayer, confession, surrendering control in a specific area).
- Close with prayer — perhaps invite each person to pray one sentence of renewed dependence.