

Sept 7/25 - 1 Samuel 7–8: Repentance and Dependence Integrated Leader's Guide

Context

- Israel's pattern (Judges): sin → suffering → repentance → deliverance → peace → repeat.
 - Samuel, last judge/first prophet, calls Israel to wholehearted loyalty.
 - 7:2–17 = National revival at Mizpah.
 - 8:1–22 = Israel's misplaced trust in human kingship.
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Q1. Idols Then and Now

Small Group Questions:

- In chapter 7, Samuel calls Israel to put away their foreign gods.
- What “foreign gods” or idols do you see most prevalent in our culture today?
- Which ones most easily compete for your own heart's trust?

Leader Notes:

- Ancient idols = Baals, Ashtoreths (fertility, prosperity, war).
 - Modern equivalents: wealth, comfort, success, image, security etc.
 - Encourage honest but gracious sharing—help people name subtle idols (e.g., “Jesus and...” mentality).
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Q2. Repentance at Mizpah

Small Group Questions:

- How do the people express repentance in 7:5–6?
- What role does confession and corporate prayer play in helping us turn from sin today?

Leader Notes:

- Acts of repentance: fasting, confession, pouring out water.
 - Corporate dimension: revival begins when God's people together turn back.
 - Application: encourage groups to consider confession or prayer practices that help sustain repentance.
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Q3. Dependence vs. Self-Reliance

Small Group Questions:

- When the Philistines attack, Israel doesn't fight or flee but asks Samuel to pray (7:8).
- Where do you find it easiest to depend on your own wisdom and strength rather than on God?

Leader Notes:

- Israel's only strategy = Samuel's intercession.
 - God thunders against Philistines (7:10)—victory is God's, not theirs.
 - Leaders can ask: Where do we tend to treat prayer as the last resort instead of first response?
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Q4. Ebenezer Stone**Small Group Questions:**

- Samuel sets up a stone of remembrance and names it "Ebenezer" (7:12).
- What would it look like for you to "set up an Ebenezer" in your life—some reminder of God's past help to fuel trust in his future help?

Leader Notes:

- "Ebenezer" = "stone of help." Marker of past grace to fuel future trust.
 - Practical: journaling answered prayers, physical symbols at home, stories retold in families/church.
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Q5. "Give Us a King"**Small Group Questions:**

- Why do the elders of Israel demand a king in chapter 8?
- In what ways do we sometimes come to God with our own pre-set solutions rather than waiting in dependence?

Leader Notes:

- Problem: Not desire for leadership per se, but rejection of God as king (8:7).
 - They seek security/prosperity "like other nations."
 - Modern parallel: seeking quick fixes, political saviors, or control.
 - Facilitate reflection on how we come to God with pre-packaged solutions.
 - When we come to God with a solution what we are saying is: *I don't lack wisdom, what I lack is power. I don't need your wisdom, I need your power—so use your power to give me this thing.*
 - Samuel sees this rightly as a rejection of God: we are saying when we come with a solution, *"I want that future, that thing, that life more than I want you."*
 - And when we want that thing more than we want God, we are setting ourselves up to be enslaved by that thing.
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Q6. The Two Kings

Small Group Questions:

- Samuel warns of a king who will “take, take, take” (8:11–18). Contrast this with King Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45).
- How does this shape your trust in Jesus in the midst of your own crises or decisions?

Leader Notes:

- Human kings: take, take, take.
 - Jesus: gives, gives, gives—even his own life (Mark 10:45).
 - The thing we want more than God will not give us what we desire—it will take, take, take; it will enslave us.
 - Point people to gospel hope: only in Jesus do we find a King who satisfies rather than enslaves.
 - Quote: *In Jesus we find one who if we receive him will fulfill us completely, if we fail him will love and forgive us eternally* — Tim Keller.
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Q7. Personal Application

Small Group Questions:

- What decision point or crisis are you facing right now?
- How might you practice dependence on God this week rather than self-reliance?

Leader Notes:

- Encourage sharing real decisions/crises.
- Prompt: What would dependence look like here? (Prayer, waiting, surrender, obedience.)
- Leaders: model vulnerability—share your own area of dependence.