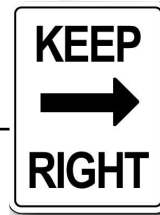


Responding to Life's Pressures



"How foolish!" Samuel exclaimed. "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." 1 Samuel 13:13 NLT

- What causes you the greatest pressure in life? How do you usually respond - panic, worry, stress, stay calm and collected, run away?

Everyone faces stress and pressure in life. We cannot avoid it. We have no control over it. However, we have choices and can control how we respond. King Saul faced many pressures, but he responded poorly, which often ended painfully. We can learn lessons from his story that will help us respond well to the pressures of life.

Central Lesson
Keep Right When You Are Driven by Pressure to Do Wrong.

What Pressures Did Saul Face?

1. Feelings of **INFERIORITY** - 1 Samuel 9:20-21; 10:21-23.

"20 ... 'And I (Samuel) am here to tell you that you and your family are the focus of all Israel's hopes.' 21 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?'"

"21 ...But when they looked for him, (Saul) he had disappeared! 22 So they asked the Lord, 'Where is he?' And the Lord replied, 'He is hiding among the baggage.' 23 So they found him and brought him out, and he stood head and shoulders above anyone else."

Saul viewed himself as a nobody. He was surprised at Samuel's words that God chose him to be the first King of Israel. Even when Samuel gathered all of Israel together to announce that Saul was to be their first king, Saul was hiding. However, the Bible is filled with stories of God calling nobodies to accomplish His purposes. Do feelings of inferiority paralyze you?

2. **FEAR** and Desertion of His Troops - 1 Samuel 13:6-9.

1 Samuel 13:6-9 NLT

"6 The men of Israel saw what a tight spot they were in; and because they were hard pressed by the enemy, they tried to hide in caves, thickets, rocks, holes, and cisterns. 7 Some of them crossed the Jordan River and escaped into the land of Gad and Gilead. Meanwhile, Saul stayed at Gilgal, and his men were trembling with fear. 8 Saul waited there seven days for Samuel, as Samuel had instructed him earlier, but Samuel still didn't come. Saul realized that his troops were rapidly slipping away. 9 So he demanded, 'Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings!' And Saul sacrificed the burnt offering himself."

Bible Teacher, Warren Wiersbe explains: "As Samuel had commanded, Saul waited for seven days (10:8), and the longer he waited, the more concerned he became. His army was melting away, the enemy was mobilizing, and the

situation seemed hopeless. This...was God's way of testing Saul's faith and patience. Without faith and patience, we can't receive what the Lord promises (Heb 6:12), and unbelief and impatience are marks of spiritual immaturity (Jas 1:1-8). Until we learn to trust God and wait on his timing, we can't learn the other lessons he wants to teach us, nor can we receive the blessings he's planned for us." *The Transformation Study Bible*, p.463.

3. A **LACK** of Resources (vs. 15, 19, 22).

- **Lack of Soldiers (v.15).**

"15 Samuel then left Gilgal and went on his way, but the rest of the troops went with Saul to meet the army. They went up from Gilgal to Gibeah in the land of Benjamin. When Saul counted the men who were still with him, he found only 600 were left!"

- **Lack of Manufacturing (v.19).**

"19 There were no blacksmiths in the land of Israel in those days...."

- **Lack of Weapons (v.22).**

"22 So on the day of the battle none of the people of Israel had a sword or spear, except for Saul and Jonathan."

How Should We Respond to Life's Pressures?

1. We Should Not **BLAME** Others for Our Disobedience (vs.10-11).

"10 Just as Saul was finishing with the burnt offering, Samuel arrived. Saul went out to meet and welcome him, 11 but Samuel said, 'What is this you have done?' Saul replied, 'I saw my men scattering from me, and you didn't arrive when you said you would, and the Philistines are at Micmash ready for battle.'"

Saul was, to some degree, blaming Samuel's tardiness for his action. However, as Bible teacher William MacDonald explains: "What appeared to be valid excuses did not change the fact that Saul had disobeyed God. For this he would lose the kingdom... This was the first of seven sins in Saul's life which resulted in his losing the throne of Israel." (pp.305-306).

2. Do not **PANIC** Over Delays - God Is Still in Control (v.12).

"12 So I said, 'The Philistines are ready to march against us at Gilgal, and I haven't even asked for the Lord's help!' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering myself before you came."

3. **OBEY** God Regardless of the Consequences (v.13).

"13 'How foolish!' Samuel exclaimed. '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. 14 But now your kingdom must end, for the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart. The Lord has already appointed him to be the leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command.'"

Again, Warren Wiersbe comments: "Saul foolishly thought that he could disobey God and get away with it, and that his disobedience could bring God's blessing on himself and his army." *Transformation*, 463. Will you obey and trust God regardless of the pressure life puts on you?

Central Lesson: Keep Right When You Are Driven by Pressure to Do Wrong.

► Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible & journal meaningful verses. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.