

# FAMILY LEADERS



## Introduction

Some of the largest companies in the world started as small, family-run businesses, like Johnson & Johnson and Purdue Pharma. Both were founded to improve people's lives through reliable healthcare products. Johnson & Johnson (started in 1886) focused on sterile surgical supplies while Purdue (started in 1892) focused on medical remedies. Their family leaders took very different approaches to growing the business.

Johnson & Johnson expanded its product offering to range from lotions to orthopedic implants. Purdue (which was bought by the Sackler family in 1952) narrowed its product offering to primarily focus on prescription medications.

Today, Johnson & Johnson is one of the largest healthcare companies in the world. It's no longer run by the Johnson family, but they still enjoy the wealth it generated. Purdue, on the other hand, has been bankrupted by lawsuits claiming it profited from the Opioid Crisis through deceptive marketing practices. Museums and universities that received philanthropic gifts from the Sackler family removed their names to create distance from the scandal.

✚ **When have you seen families guided to success or failures by their leaders?**

## **Session Context**

It's been about 20 to 25 years since God agreed to give Israel an earthly king (see 1 Samuel 8). In those years, several key things have occurred:

- Samuel anoints and appoints a Benjamite named Saul as king
- Saul leads Israel to defeat the Ammonites
- Samuel publicly confirms Saul as king after the battle
- Samuel presents the Israelites with all the evidence of them rejecting God as king
- Samuel warns Israel that they and their king should be careful to obey and serve God alone
- Saul calls the Israelites to defend against the Philistines after his son attacks them but the Israelites become scared of the Philistine army

- Samuel tells Saul to wait 7 days for him but Saul disobeys God by offering sacrifices without Samuel
- Samuel tells Saul his disobedience has caused the monarchy not to stay with Saul's line
- Several years later, Saul leads a fight against the Amalekites

## Scripture Exploration

### 1 Samuel 15:10-26

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<sup>10</sup> Then the LORD's word came to Samuel, saying, <sup>11</sup> "It grieves me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he has turned back from following me, and has not performed my commandments." Samuel was angry; and he cried to the LORD all night.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning; and Samuel was told, saying, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, turned, passed on, and went down to Gilgal."

<sup>13</sup> Samuel came to Saul; and Saul said to him, "You are blessed by the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."

<sup>14</sup> Samuel said, "Then what does this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the cattle which I hear mean?"

<sup>15</sup> Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the cattle, to sacrifice to the LORD your God. We have utterly destroyed the rest."

<sup>16</sup> Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stay, and I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night."

He said to him, "Say on."

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<sup>17</sup> Samuel said, "Though you were little in your own sight, weren't you made the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel; <sup>18</sup> and the LORD sent you on a journey, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' <sup>19</sup> Why then didn't you obey the LORD's voice, but took the plunder, and did that which was evil in the LORD's sight?"

<sup>20</sup> Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the LORD's voice, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. <sup>21</sup> But the people took of the plunder, sheep and cattle, the best of the devoted things, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

<sup>22</sup> Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the LORD's voice? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. <sup>23</sup> For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim. Because you have rejected the LORD's word, he has also rejected you from being king."

<sup>24</sup> Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. <sup>25</sup> Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD."

<sup>26</sup> Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the LORD's word, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."

## **VERSES 10-12**

Saul's failure to kill the Amalekite king and livestock the way God instructed led to God feeling hurt and Samuel being angry. God had entrusted Saul with a great responsibility

and Samuel had publicly warned Saul and the Israelites that disobeying God would lead to disastrous outcomes. But Saul saw his actions as worthy of honor and built a monument to himself.

### **VERSES 13-23**

Saul and Samuel's exchange reflects how differently they viewed the Amalekite outcome. Saul saw victory where Samuel saw failure. Saul tried to defend his actions by appealing to what he thought would appease God (sacrifice) but Samuel explained God's value system which put obedience above sacrifice. Samuel also told Saul the consequence of his disobedience was rejection as king.

### **VERSES 24-26**

Upon hearing God's rejection of him, Saul moved from excuse to admission. He acknowledged his failure to obey God fully was a sin and became honest about why: he feared people more than God. Though he asked for forgiveness, God had made his decision. Saul was going to lose his kingship because he neglected his responsibility.

## **Life Application**

### **+ Our disobedience grieves God.**

God anointed and appointed Saul as king over Israel because he knew Saul *could* lead them well. His decision was an extension of trust. So, when Saul disobeyed God, it showed Saul didn't trust God.

God trusts us with important responsibilities. What he directs us to do is always for our benefit. So when we don't obey, it hurts his feelings. Our disobedience tells God, "I don't trust you."

**+ We can delegate responsibility but not accountability.**

Saul tried to argue he followed God but the people he led didn't. He said "but the people took of the plunder," suggesting that they were to blame instead of him. God had told Saul what to do as the leader. It was Saul's job to make sure the people obeyed and correct them if they didn't. He was accountable.

When God gives us instructions, it's on us to ensure they are followed. Even if we delegate certain tasks to others, we cannot escape that we're accountable for obeying God fully which includes correcting those who may not have followed our directions completely.

**+ God values obedience above appearance.**

The Israelites appeared to obey God. They destroyed the parts of the Amalekites they didn't want and kept the parts they found valuable. Samuel called their actions rebellion and stubbornness.

Everything God tells us to do is for a purpose we may not fully understand. Our lack of understanding doesn't justify disobedience. Instead, it signals we are rejecting God's guidance and idolizing ourselves.

## Session Reflection

- Whose leadership do you follow and why?
- When have you experienced leaders trying to defend irresponsible actions?
- Why do people find it hard to accept accountability when they delegate responsibility?
- What challenges do you need to overcome to be more accountable and responsible in obeying God?

