



SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY – “BREAKING THE KING SAUL SYNDROME”

EMS505 – Growing Disciples Intentionally

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The following is a six-week Bible study that I extracted from Jonathan Martin’s book entitled “Breaking the King Saul Syndrome.” It looks at the story of King Saul, and how his son and rightful heir to throne from a royal succession perspective, Jonathan, gave his “kingdom” away to David—God’s chosen and rightful king over all of Israel.

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In all my years of work and ministry, I have always found myself surprised at how little attention the organizations I have been a part of give to strategically focused leadership development. If there is training, it is either very brief at the beginning of a task, or it is more of a “get thrown into the fire” philosophy—often in the name of “hands-on” experience. And while there is certainly value to both of those methods, they are not helpful if one truly wants to develop great leaders who purposefully set up to leave a legacy for the Kingdom of God.

Ironically, jump on to Amazon.com, or walk into your local Barnes & Noble, and there is an endless array of leadership books. Pop on to the iTunes Store and do a search for leadership podcasts or simply do a Google search for leadership blogs and, again, you quickly discover that everyone has something to say about leadership. And yet, very little of this knowledge seems to have translated into helping the people within our churches and organizations to become the leaders that God created each of them to be. In the process, we have done a poor job of helping show people they are, above all else, created in the image of God.

Through the following six-week Bible study centered around Jonathan Martin’s book *Breaking the King Saul Syndrome*¹, my hope and prayer is that men and women would come away from it with a very clear and concise idea of what servant leadership is all about. I want them to see why servant leadership is not just a theory or general principle to apply to our lives or careers, but it should be synonymous with our identity as passionate followers of Jesus Christ. I want them to see that, done right, servant leadership is one of the areas in our lives where we best reflect God’s heart. It also provides us with one of the most effective ways to help advance the Kingdom of God.

¹ Martin, Jonathan. *Breaking the King Saul Syndrome*. Portland: Co-Serve International, 2012. Print.

This Bible study should move men and women from the desire for a comfortable life to begin to see the far greater vision God sees for their lives. Ultimately, this means that by end of the study, my expectation is that they will hopefully have their hearts and minds focused more on God's ever-advancing Kingdom, and less on their own. They will not only know how to reorient their leadership aim, but they will have a deep desire to do so (or at least a willing posture as a beginning point toward action steps). My hope and prayer is that those who go through this Bible study will embrace the beauty of discipleship, desiring to bring others into alignment with God's heart for leadership, which I believe is bringing glory to Him through the empowering of others to be nearer to the image of God.

To accomplish this, I would construct this Bible study in the following ways. First, the focus would of course be on the Bible itself and the Scriptures I have laid out below—most of which I pulled directly from Martin's book. We would begin our Bible study with prayer over our conversation and the lives of the men and women who are not only participating in the Bible study, but of those we will influence as a result of this study. Aside from our first week, the expectation would also be that we have read the corresponding chapters in Martin's book, relating to our current week's lesson. We will then take time to highlight some of the observations we made from the book before digging into this week's scriptures. After discussing what we found there, we will then bounce around some of the below questions as a group before concluding with actionable next steps and concluding thoughts. This of course can take on many different forms. But ultimately, I am confident that with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will

arrive at a place that will push our leadership outward and upward toward God's desire for us to, as Martin puts it, "give the Kingdom away²."

BIBLE STUDY – *BREAKING THE KING SAUL SYNDROME* by Jonathan Martin

WEEK 1: The King Saul Syndrome Is an Epidemic, and We Are All Victims

CHAPTER 1 – "Oh, How the Mighty Have Fallen!" / CHAPTER 2 – "The Cancerous Crown.

The Fall of the House of Saul"

- QUOTE TO PONDER

- *"Power is my mistress. I have worked too hard at her conquest to allow anyone to take her away from me."* – Napoleon

- MAIN POINTS

- Power is dangerous with the wrong perspective. King Saul lurks in the heart of those who seek it.
- Power and leadership are temporary and we are accountable. We must steward them well.
- We cannot let people or our own selfish ambitions drive how we lead others. Our leadership needs to be about God, what He wants for His followers and for His glory, not our own.

- SCRIPTURES

- 1 Samuel 10:17-19 (Israel wants a king)
- 1 Samuel 8:10-19 (Samuel warns Israel about the dangers of a king)

² This of course is one of Martin's main thrusts all throughout his book. It is essentially our way of duplicating what Jonathan did in the Bible when he too gave his throne away—his kingdom—to David.

- 1 Samuel 13 (Being a king wasn't enough for Saul. He wanted more, and He wanted what was not his)
- 1 Samuel 15:22-23 (God rejects Saul as king)

- QUESTIONS

- How do you view power and leadership? Where have you seen it used well?
Where have you seen it abused?
- What does leadership look like for you personally?
- Where are you most likely to sin in your life, especially in regards to ethics?
- What part of your life do you need to give away?
- How do people influence you, both positively and negatively?

WEEK 2: Leadership Is Not About Us, It Is Far Bigger

CHAPTER 3 – “The Cure. Jonathan: The Man Who Would NOT Be King” / CHAPTER 4 –
“The King Saul Syndrome: It’s Saul Over This World”

- QUOTES TO PONDER

- *“I hope our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us, that the less we use our power the greater it will be.”* – Thomas Jefferson
- *“Where love rules, there is no will to power; and where power predominates, there love is lacking. The one is the shadow of the other.”* – Carl Jung

- MAIN POINTS

- Human history has shown us we do not have a great track record in regards to stewarding power well.
- God calls us to give His Kingdom away, helping others rise to leadership challenges and lead in the way God instructs.

- Your “primary job is to equip and train those you lead to be complete in Christ – to unleash them in the power and gifting of the Holy Spirit. It is not to command and control, but to empower –even if that means letting them surpass you³.”

- SCRIPTURES

- 1 Samuel 20:8 (David has a healthy respect for those in power above him)
- 1 Samuel 20:16-23 (Jonathan offers up a covenant of protection and love for David, despite his father’s hate and anger toward David)
- 1 Samuel 20:41-42 (Jonathan keeps his promise, honors his covenant with David and they interweave their hearts with one another)
- 1 Samuel 23:16-18 (Jonathan officially gives his kingdom away to David)

- QUESTIONS

- Who are some of the greatest leaders in your life both past and present? Who are great leaders you respect from history (outside of Jesus Christ)? Why?
- How did you develop your current philosophy of leadership? Where have you succeeded in leadership? Where have you failed?
- Who in your life can you pour into, build up and train? How do you plan to do so?

WEEK 3: Do Not Seek After the Throne, It Is Not Yours to Occupy

CHAPTER 5 – “The Hunger to Lead: The Seeds of the Syndrome” / CHAPTER 6 – “Leadership Style – A Matter of Cultural Preference”

- QUOTES TO PONDER

³ Martin, page 50

- *“It is said that power corrupts, but actually it’s more true that power attracts the corruptible. The sane are usually attracted by other things than power.” – David Brin*
- *“Jesus’ ministry was clearly defined, and the alternatives to the illusion and temptations of the desert were spelled out. A choice was made—life abundant, full, and free for all. Make no mistake about it the day the choice was made, Jesus became suspect. ... How was the world to understand one who rejected an offer of power and control? – Joan Campbell*

- MAIN POINTS

- We are called to benefit others by teaching them to thrive and be all that God made them to be. We need to honor others over ourselves.
- We need to ask ourselves why we want to lead in the first place. We need to pinpoint what the driving force is behind our ambition.
- We should avoid seeking leadership for a “crown,” or the power that comes with certain titles.
- We are to point others toward Jesus Christ, to seek Him out and become more like Him in that process.
- God’s Kingdom, our “kingdom,” should remain small and focused so it can grow into something infinitely bigger—it is like the mustard seed Jesus refers to in the Gospels⁴.
- King Saul vs. the Apostle Paul⁵

⁴ I really appreciate Martin’s description of this on pages 72-72: “The Kingdom is like a mustard seed. Planted in the ground. A seed dead in the ground. And from it a sprout. A single shoot. Then a branch. Two, four, eight, 16. Soon too many to count, all with beautiful lush leaves until it has become a huge tree where the bird flock to simply rest in the branches.”

- SCRIPTURES

- Luke 22:24-30 (Who is the greatest? Jesus explains)
- John 14:12-14 (Jesus, the God-Man himself, says His disciples will do even greater works than Him. He then gives a promise)
- John 16:7-15 (Besides salvation, it is to our advantage that Jesus died so He could send His Holy Spirit to help His followers do these great works for Him)
- Philippians 2:3-9 (What a true and rightful king looks like)

- QUESTIONS

- Why have you sought out leadership or power up to this point? Or, if you have not, why not?
- Do you feel complete in Christ? How do you think you are created in His Image?
- Who have you honored in your life? Who have you benefited lately?
- How is the Holy Spirit living and acting in your life?

WEEK 4: God Heart and Desire Is for Us; We Are Made to Be More

CHAPTER 7 – “Who’s Anointed Anyway?” / CHAPTER 8 – “Command and Control or Let the Holy Spirit Lead?”

- QUOTES TO PONDER

- *“Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”* – Abraham Lincoln
- *“Often times a man’s exceptional gifting takes him to a level his character cannot sustain.”* – Ed Cole

- MAIN POINTS

⁵ Martin has a comparison chart between Saul and Paul on page 65 that could be printed and handed out.

- Everyone who has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ becomes anointed to lead by the Holy Spirit. We are all viewed as royalty to God—none of us is more special or more “anointed” than the other.
- Leadership roles and title are given to us by God to utilize so we can serve others.
- God wants all of Jesus’ followers to seek His face. He wants us to step into our true identities and seek out our innate and spiritual giftings through prayer and communication with Him.
- We are to equip others so they will go and change the world by influencing others positively. We should lift others up even if it means they might surpass us.
- We are to build up one another—the church—in love. We must find out what the dreams and visions of those within our sphere of influence are, and then do our part to make those a reality for them.
- “We are to raise and build up self-feeders who discern the Holy Spirit’s direction and vision for their lives and ministries⁶.”

- SCRIPTURES

- 1 John 2:20, 27 (It is the Holy Spirit, not man, who anoints us with leadership; it is a gift, not a right we are entitled to)
- Ephesians 4:9-16 (The power and effectiveness of our descent—just like Jesus’ descent which led to His ascent)
- 1 Peter 5:1-7 (Our pathway to godly leadership; how we are to wield the “power” we are given)
- Colossians 2:18-19; Ephesians 1:22-23 (Jesus is the true visionary)

⁶ Martin, page 99

- 1 Corinthians 12-14 (Paul writes that Jesus is most concerned with His people using their gifts for the edification of the church body)

- QUESTIONS

- What do you feel are your gifts? How are you currently using them to benefit others and build them up in Christ?
- What do you feel “anointed” to do? What sort of legacy do you want to leave with that “anointing”?
- What are you doing right now to build up your family, your local church and your community? How can you improve on this even more?
- How are you developing a relationship with God at this point in time?

WEEK 5: Have You Built Up a House of Cards?

CHAPTER 9 – “Why Discipleship So Often Fails?” / CHAPTER 10 – “The Pain of Letting Go”

- QUOTES TO PONDER

- *“The love of liberty is the love of others; the love of power is the love of ourselves.”* – William Hazlitt
- *“Power does not corrupt. Fear corrupts ... perhaps the fear of a loss of power.”* – John Steinbeck

- MAIN POINTS

- Our main mode of ministry—the main thrust of everything we do as a church—should be discipleship.
- We need to find someone younger than us—someone with leadership potential—and launch them. We should always be mentoring somebody, and aim to do whatever we can to help them surpass us in their leadership abilities.

- In all things, put God’s Kingdom first. We must say yes to whatever best advances His Kingdom regardless of how we fit into that movement.
- Our security comes from God. It should not come from anything (or anyone) else.
- If we do not know how to train, equip and build other servant leaders, we need to learn how to do so (seeking God and others to help in this process).
- Set everything up in your life for longterm success. Do not build a house of cards that lives and dies with us. Train, equip and build to last.

- SCRIPTURES

- 2 Samuel 23:8-39 (David’s Mighty Men)
- 2 Timothy 2:1-2 (Teach others what Christ taught you)
- Ephesians 4:11-14 (We all have roles to play in God’s Kingdom, and we are to utilize these by helping others mature in Christ)
- Matthew 7:24-28 (Build your house on the Rock)

- QUESTIONS

- Do you have a group of “mighty men” in your life? If so, how do they make you better? How do you make them better and increase their greatness?
- Who are you mentoring right now? What are you trying to accomplish through that experience?
- Is your world—your leadership—a house of cards? What does the foundation look like?
- Is God first in your life? If not, what keeps you from making this so?

WEEK 6: Completing the Puzzle and Starting a New One

CHAPTER 11 – “What if My Leader is a King Saul?” / CHAPTER 12 – “Following in Jonathan’s Steps”

- MAIN POINTS

- We are all King Saul to some degree. He lurks in all our hearts.
- Love is the catalyst for change and confrontation (if needed). When it is front and center in everything we do, it makes a way in virtually any circumstance.
- It is not our job to take down our leaders. God can do this fine on His own. We are to reconcile, redeem and redirect if needed—not destroy.
- We need to have an accountability structure in place in our lives.
- If we have exhausted all loving outlets when dealing with unhealthy circumstances in our work, we might need to leave.
- We must become a servant leader. And we do this by cultivating these 16 principles of servant leadership: community, values, influence, integrity, change, respect, brokenness, sacrifice, listening, empathy, service, purpose, acceptance, forgiveness, empowering and hard work⁷.

- SCRIPTURES

- 1 Samuel 26 with emphasis on verses 10-11 and 23-24 (How David views King Saul)
- James 4:1-3 (We are all King Saul to some degree)
- Matthew 7:1-5 (Deal with the log in our own eye)

⁷ Martin lays these out more specifically on pages 144-147 of his book. These could be printed out, discussed and hopefully implemented in the weeks that follow. Perhaps the church or organization could focus on each one of these principles for one month at a time—or even one week—by integrating them into the work flow and processes that are currently taking place.

- 2 Samuel 1:17-27 (Despite King Saul's view and relationship with David, David honored King Saul because he was "the Lord's anointed")

- QUESTIONS

- How are you currently showing love, honor, and respect to people (outside your family)?
- In what ways has the "King Saul Syndrome" shown up in your life? What are you currently doing (or should you be doing) to counter that reality?
- Have you reconciled with anyone in your life lately who you have had problems with in the past, or perhaps hurt deeply? If this is a step still needed, how will you go about doing this?
- Is there anything in your life right now that you need to cut loose from? Is there any outside force or influence that is keeping you from moving forward in your life, career and/or ministry?
- Do you consider yourself a servant leader? If so, which of Martin's 16 principles have been driving influences? Which ones are you going to focus on over the span of this next week? Next month? Next year?