

Bible Study Teaching Plan for March 18, 2018
I Samuel 7 “Confession, Repentance, and Remembrance”
Lesson 3 Teaching Plan by Dr. Williamson

CREATE INTEREST

1. Write the words, “Confession” and “Repentance” on the marker board. ASK: What is your understanding of these two words? How do they differ? What would be an example of each? Discuss.

ASK: Which normally comes first in your experience, confession or repentance? Discuss.

SAY: It may be similar to “the chicken and the egg” question...which came first?”

2. SAY: We will be looking at these words as they related to the lives of the Israelites. In our last study, we looked at hearing God’s voice through the example of young Samuel. As Samuel grew older, he became (and was looked upon) as a “prophet” for Israel.

GUIDE BIBLE STUDY

3. SAY: Chapters 4-6 of I Samuel do not mention Samuel at all. Rather, it is the voice of a narrator telling what happened in Israel. Share the story:

- The Philistines came out and attacked the Israelites.
- The Israelites were defeated that day, losing 4000 men.
- The Israelites thought if they brought the Ark of the Covenant out to the battlefield, the LORD would fight for them against the Philistines. Hophni and Phineas (Eli’s two wicked sons) were present with the Ark.
- The Philistines were initially afraid because of the Ark, but never-the-less, they fought. Not only did the Philistines win, killing 30,000 Israelites--including Hophni and Phineas--but they also captured the Ark of the covenant.
- A messenger went back to Eli, the Priest, and told him what happened. Eli fell back in his chair and broke his neck and died (thus fulfilling the prophecy God shared with Samuel)
- The Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant to Dagon’s temple. The next day, Dagon, the image/idol had fallen before the Ark, as if worshipping it. They set Dagon back up, but the next day the same thing happened. This time his head and hands had been broken off.
- The Lord was against the Philistines. The Philistines moved the Ark of God to Gath. But the LORD was against them in that city as well, throwing them into a great panic. They determined to give the Ark back to Israel.
- They sent the Ark back to Israel using a cart with two oxen. They included offerings of gold with the Ark.
- The Ark arrived at Beth Shemesh, and the Israelites celebrated with a burnt offering. However, some of the Israelites looked inside the ark, which they were forbidden to do. Seventy Israelites died as a result. The people mourned. They sent for someone from Kiriath Jearim (“City of Forests”), near Jerusalem, to come and get the Ark of the Covenant.
- The Ark remained in the house of Abinadaab, where Eleazer, his son, (and a priest) guarded it.
- Even though the Ark was returned, the Israelites remained under the control of the Philistines for 20 years.

4. Have volunteer read I Samuel 7:2-4. SAY: The Israelites felt sorrow, but it was more for their situation than it was for remorse from their sin. They were expressing sorrow, but not repenting. They merely wanted out from the control of the Philistines. Samuel told them that if they wanted to return to the

LORD, they would have to repent and change their actions. They would have to get rid of the idols they had brought into their homes, (thus breaking the 10 Commandments). The Ashtoreths were idols to the pagan goddesses, Astarte and Ishtar, both of whom the Philistines worshipped through sexual acts, thinking that she could bring fertility to their lands.

ASK: Based on reading of these verses, which needed to come first according to Samuel, confession or repentance? (Discuss). There is a case for both. Certainly recognition of their sin was needed before they could repent, but repentance (action, change of direction) was needed if they expected God to hear or act on their behalf. Samuel said action must take place IF they want to return to the LORD.

5. Have volunteer read vs. 5-6. SAY: After the Israelites repented, Samuel gathered them for worship. There in worship, they confessed their sin. But it was after they got rid of their idols. Following both confession and repentance, Samuel interceded on their behalf, acting as a “Priest,” a go between from the people to God. Earlier we noted Samuel was already seen as God’s “Prophet.”

SAY: The pouring out of the water onto the ground isn’t an action we see elsewhere in the Bible, so scholars are not exactly sure of the meaning. Most seem to think it signified washing away of sin and guilt, sort of like dirt soaks up water. In this situation, Repentance clearly preceded the Confession of sin. However, BOTH are needed, no matter the order, to access God’s salvation.

6. Have volunteer read vs. 7. SAY: The Israelites gathered to worship God, but the Philistines thought they were gathering for war. The Philistines prepared to attack, this time leaving the Israelites in fear.

Aside: SAY: Even in our lives day, sometimes when we have a “mountain top” type experience with God, Satan comes to challenge what has been done, to see if he can cast doubt or cause us to forget God. The Israelites experienced that sort of circumstance in this passage. After worshipping God, the Philistines gathered to attack them. This time, instead of relying on the Ark of God to protect them, the Israelites turned to Samuel and to God in prayer.

Psalm 56:3 says, “When I am afraid, I will trust in you.” Although the Psalm had not been written at that time, it was what the Israelites did. They begged Samuel not to stop “crying out to the Lord.” Crying out to the Lord was a foundational characteristic of the Israelites faith. (i.e. In past history, the Israelites “cried out to God” in Egypt, and God heard their cries). Samuel cried out to God and God responded to his prayer. God acted to save or deliver them from the Philistines. While we rejoice in God’s action, we should not always expect that God would respond so quickly to our prayers. Sometimes God says, “yes” to our prayers. Sometimes, “no.” Sometimes “wait.” Prayer is to align our thoughts and actions with God and His ways.

7. SAY: In chapter 7, we see the elements of the cyclical pattern also found many times in the book of Judges:

- Israel sinned against God
- God punished, utilizing another ethnic group to rule over them
- Israel cried out to God to save or deliver them
- God saved his people through a judge or deliver

SAY: Chapter 7 now has depicted Samuel as a prophet, a priest, a leader, and a judge, all in this one chapter. Jesus would later be seen as a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, filling in an even greater role than Samuel played.

APPLY TO LIFE

8. Have volunteer read vs. 12. SAY: in the hymn, "Come thou Fount of Every Blessing," the second stanza says, "Here I raise mine Ebenezer, hither by thy help I've come." The hymn is referring to this event here in chapter 7.

ASK: What are ways we "celebrate" or "remember" God's work in our lives? (Discuss)

Have you ever done anything to celebrate God's work in your life? Or has the church ever celebrated God's work in and through His church? If so, let's share some examples? Discuss. Answers will vary. Some will say "none" or "no." Possible answers: Telling someone else; the Lord's supper and baptism are both symbolic ways we remember God's work in our lives. Building a building for worship and for children can be seen as a way of celebrating. Daily worship or corporate worship. Writing in the front or back of your Bible is a good way to remember. Christmas and Easter are both times we celebrate God's work in our lives.

9. Have volunteer read vs. 13-17. Notice that Samuel "always went back to Ramah" and he built an altar there, too. It is good to have a place you can regularly "return to" to spend time with God in prayer, meditation, and private worship.

10. SAY: We started out talking about Confession and Repentance, and which comes first. Maybe they are so entwined that we cannot separate them: both are needed in our walk with the Lord, as well as Remembrance. The Holy Spirit is the one who leads us to be able to do all three in our lives.

11. OPTION. Discuss how to teach someone else to "repent" of their sin, and to "confess" their sin. ASK: What is the reason for naming our sins, one-by-one, to God in prayer? Discuss. (Answer: It let's God know that WE know there is an issue to be dealt with.

12. Have a time of silent prayer, encouraging class to confess (silently) their sin, and to repent.