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1 SAMUEL 14:15-52

Three Men and a Battle – Part 2
1 Samuel Series

[PRAYER] We know you wash our hearts whiter than snow. We're grateful for that. So God, as we come into your presence, we recognize that you are omnipresent. You're always around us. We can see you everywhere we are, but there's a way that we come into your presence that is special when we acknowledge you in our hearts and we draw our hearts close to you. Lord, we know that sometimes the challenges of life, the busyness, the struggles we face cause some distance. Yet when we come close to you we experience your grace in new ways to deal with our own pain and our own suffering and our challenges. So right now, Lord, we just open our hearts and we want to draw close to your heart. Connect our hearts together this morning in a way that we can experience and then leave here encouraged, inspired, and sometimes even convicted of our own weaknesses and sins that need to be addressed. Lord, we are humbled by our own mistakes and foolishness and challenges. We know that it's only by your grace that we have the ability to stand and do anything in life. So we want to thank you for all you've done for us, for the gifts that you've given to us in relationships, for the successes that we've had. We ask, Lord, to continue to grow us, to be closer to you. Give us the confidence that you are working in our lives. Help us understand more of what that looks like in practical terms as we look at your word now. In Jesus' name, amen.

You can open your Bibles to 1 Samuel 14 starting in verse 15. This is the second part of a sermon called "Three Men and a Battle." The first part we started last week. If you weren't here, I just want to summarize for you what we talked about last week and bring you up to speed on the teaching from last week.

In this story, we learned about two of the men last week. One is Jonathan. We need more Jonathans in the world. Jonathans are the people who want to serve the Lord. They want to step out for the Lord. They take bold risks. They say, "Okay, I'm going to move forward." They don't know exactly maybe what God wants to do (sometimes we don't know), but in Jonathan's words he says, "Perhaps the Lord is going to do this." So he's going to step out and take a bold initiative to see if God's going to respond and what God's going to do. Of course in this particular situation God answered by responding and giving him direction by moving him forward. That's the first guy, Jonathan. We need more Jonathans, more leaders. Each one of us can be those leaders.

The second guy in the story is the armor-bearer. The armor-bearer is the guy (we don't even know his name) who says to Jonathan, "*I am with you heart and soul.*" His whole heart is in there. In other words he's a supporter and he's saying I'm with you completely.

I think in all of our lives we are supporters. All of us are Jonathans, all of us are armor-bearers. We just need to know when to play which one and we need to come in and give it our all and watch the Lord work.

Now in the story Jonathan kind of tests the Lord. "I'm going to move forward, Lord, and if that's where you want to go, make it evident." God does, so Jonathan starts this battle. But the beautiful thing (as is true in our lives) is when we take initiative with the Lord and He is directing us in a particular direction then He multiplies our efforts.

So if you look at verse 15 of chapter 14, you'll see the words – *Then panic struck the whole army—those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties—and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God.* In other words God took the loaves and fishes and multiplied them. When Jonathan stepped out and said, "I'm going to act and follow the rod here," God multiplied that, Jonathan's effort, and great things happened.

Now when anyone takes initiative and starts serving the Lord or doing something and God is blessing them, then people start to take notice. That's where we're going to pick up the story today in verse 16.

Saul is our third of the three men in the battle. Verse 16 says – *Saul's lookouts at Gibeah in Benjamin saw the army melting away in all directions. Then Saul said to the men who were with him, "Muster the forces and see who has left us." When they did, it was Jonathan and his armor-bearer who were not there.*

It's interesting Jonathan isn't the main leader in the story. Saul is, but God is working through Jonathan to take initiative because Jonathan is sensitive to what God is doing. I really like the picture there and people start to see what's going on.

So Saul now is the leader and needs to respond to this. So in verse 18 it says – *Saul said to Ahijah, who is the priest, but really represents God's presence within the story. The priest would represent God to man and man to God. That was the priest's responsibility. He resembles or exemplifies the presence of God in the midst of the decision-making in what's happening, as we'll see here. Verse 18 – Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God." The ark of God was the presence of God. Bring it here because we need to know what God's doing here. We want to seek the Lord here, is what he's saying. I really like that. Notice it says – (At that time it was with the Israelites.)*

Verse 19 – *While Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the Philistine camp increased more and more.* So it became tumultuous or confusing. Things started getting confusing. Just imagine in your life you start one thing, and then something happens, and then something else happens, and then something else happens, and life starts getting rather confusing. That's what happens to him. It's starting to get really confusing out there.

So notice what Saul does. *So Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand."* Forget it, he says. We're not going to pray. We're just going to act.

Saul is going to make four mistakes in this passage and I want to draw your attention to them because they're warnings for us in our lives. He goes into this battle, he's going to act without going in and seeking the Lord and he doesn't have clear direction. He's basically saying, "I'm going to do this. God, follow me," instead of "I'm going to follow the Lord." We have to realize God was already working in this situation. Had Saul followed the lead of what was going on, he may not have made this mistake. He needed the Lords' guidance. In essence he's saying, "Hey God, I've got this one. I don't need you."

When I act without being spiritual, then my pride can get me in trouble. I say or do things I think are smart, are good ideas at the time, but in the end I regret what I've done. Saul is in that place. He's not being spiritual. He's not seeking the Lord.

One of the things that we're going to see here in Saul's life is he doesn't draw himself close to the Lord as a leader in order to make wise decisions. Great application for us. We need to be sensitive to the Lord no matter what's going on. What is God doing in this situation and how can we follow His lead.

Saul says to the priest, "*Withdraw your hand* or forget it." Forget this. We're just going to go into battle.

Verse 20 – *Then Saul and all his men assembled and went to the battle. They found the Philistines in total confusion, striking each other with their swords. Those Hebrews who had previously been with the Philistines...* Now what were they doing with the Philistines?

Remember just in life in general there are some people who kind of go with whatever the flow is, even if the flow isn't the right thing, So in this case the Philistines looked very dangerous and persuasive, so apparently some of the Israelites went over to their camp. Well now it says – *Those Hebrews who had previously been with the Philistines and had gone up with them to their camp went over to the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan.* So they switched sides now because it looked like the battle is going in the favor of Saul and Jonathan.

When all the Israelites who had hidden in the hill country of Ephraim – remember we saw some were hiding behind rocks, some were hiding down in cisterns – in other words, they didn't want to get caught, so these were the hiding group of the people. We have those who had kind of gone over the Philistine camp and then we have the hiding group of people.

When they *heard that the Philistines were on the run, they joined the battle in hot pursuit.* So they want to get in on this too. They join in with the leadership and start to move forward. *So on that day the Lord saved Israel, and the battle moved on beyond Beth Aven.*

I just think it's interesting what happens to the followers and it's just a reminder that if you're leading and following the Lord and you don't want to use public opinion as your basis for making decisions. Because the public opinion flip-flops back and forth. You want to do what the right thing is and notice God is working and you find out where God is working. God is moving, Jonathan is the leader in this case, and is making progress for the kingdom.

Now Saul is seeing the Lord work in a powerful way, he just doesn't know how to get himself into it and what's going to happen. So he seems to be confused in this story. He doesn't know how to lead, he doesn't know how to follow. Maybe if he had spent some time with priest, maybe if he had allowed the presence of the ark there, and he would have consulted the Lord better, maybe he would have clearer direction in this story than he has.

He's about to make the second mistake. I'm going to read verse 24 and then I'm going to tell you what that mistake is. Verse 24 says – *Now the Israelites were in distress that day, because Saul had bound the people under an oath, saying, "Cursed be anyone who eats food before evening comes, before I have avenged myself on my enemies!" So none of the troops tasted food.* So he's acting randomly. In fact he's actually choosing a spiritual thing to do (fasting) and he's saying okay, things are going well here, let's add fasting to the picture. But he's acting randomly. It's not fitting into the whole picture, and so he's creating a problem.

Notice it said in verse 24 *the Israelites were in distress*. We're going to read in verse 25 how this impacts the community and what's happening because he just acts. I think his mistake here is again he's acting randomly because he isn't seeking the Lord. Kind of like the first problem. He acts first and then he dismisses the Lord. Here he's acting randomly and reacting, and even chooses a spiritual activity that isn't the best place to do it. He says we're going to do a fast today. So now the troops who are supposed to be fighting the battle and working don't have the energy they need to do what they need to do.

Here's what happens in verse 25. *The entire army entered the woods, and there was honey on the ground. When they went into the woods, they saw the honey oozing out; yet no one put his hand to his mouth, because they feared the oath. But Jonathan had not heard that his father had bound the people with the oath, so he reached out the end of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it into the honeycomb. He raised his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened. Then one of the soldiers told him, "Your father bound the army under a strict oath, saying, 'Cursed be anyone who eats food today!' That is why the men are faint."*

It seems to me from the story that Saul is doing something that's unwise. Now a wise person is somebody who can see the consequences of the current activity. That's what wisdom is. Being able to see the consequences of the current activity. A foolish person doesn't recognize the consequences of their actions and ends up making a foolish mistake that has consequences they didn't realize.

Now I think we all want to be on this pilgrimage of being more wise in our lives and less foolish. There's a tendency in youth that the young people can tend to be foolish, that we don't realize the consequences. That's why God encourages so much the obtaining wisdom from parents and other counselors before you make decisions. Because you can end up making a decision that's foolish.

I talked to a woman this week who has come to the end of her lease on her car. I'm just going to tell you straight out, don't ever lease a car unless you know exactly what you're doing. Don't lease a car. It's usually a foolish way of obtaining a car. It looks good at the beginning, but in

this case it was a very foolish mistake. Now the car is ready to be turned in, she goes to turn in the car, and she owes \$7,000 in fees because of the mileage that had to be charged that was part of the lease. She went over the mileage and the mileage cost a lot of money, at \$7,000. That's a foolish thing, generally speaking, to lease a car. But she didn't know that, so she went in and she leased this car and made a serious mistake.

It's just an example of how sometimes people don't know what they're doing and so they make mistakes. Get wisdom, get help, understand the consequences of actions as much as possible. The reality is we don't have all the wisdom we need. That's why God says in James *if you lack wisdom, then you seek the Lord*. Because that's where He's going to provide that wisdom. But He also provides counselors and others who can help us in that process.

Verse 29 is Jonathan's response to the fact that the soldiers said, "You shouldn't be doing this. Your dad made an oath." *Jonathan said, "My father has made trouble for the country. See how my eyes brightened when I tasted a little of this honey. How much better it would have been if the men had eaten today some of the plunder they took from their enemies. Would not the slaughter of the Philistines have been even greater?"*

So Jonathan recognizes the consequences of the decision that his dad didn't recognize. So his dad is making a foolish decision here. Jonathan seems to have a handle on this leadership thing. Saul seems to be missing it.

Saul even seems to be getting in the way of what God wants to do. That's fascinating because eventually God is going to take him out of the picture. He's going to bring out another king, a man after His own heart. But it's because Saul is getting in the way of what God wants to do. He's not following the directions that God has. We'll learn more about that after we get through David and Goliath, and that's coming in the coming chapters here. So we've got a few more chapters to learn more about Saul being moved out of the picture.

Verse 31 – *That day, after the Israelites had struck down the Philistines from Mikdash to Aijalon, they were exhausted.* What happens when you're tired? I don't know about you, but when I'm tired my threshold is lower and that's when I'm prone to make errors or do things that are not the best. That's what's going to happen here. So they were exhausted.

They pounced on the plunder and, taking sheep, cattle and calves, they butchered them on the ground and ate them, together with the blood. Then someone said to Saul, "Look, the men are sinning against the Lord by eating meat that has blood in it."

Let me explain this. God had special guidelines for His people, rules that He set up. They are dietary guidelines, relationship guidelines, financial guidelines, sexual purity guidelines. And then He says after the guidelines, "If you do what I've said, none of these diseases will come to you." That's very important. God wanted to protect His people. He didn't just set up these rules to be some kind of an ogre. These rules that God set up in His word were designed to protect the people so that they wouldn't get the diseases that other nations would have.

We can understand that now when we look at the bacteria that's in food and other kinds of things. Why? He would say cook the meat thoroughly and you'll be protected. So he had this protection within the dietary guidelines. He also had the protection in the sexual purity guidelines so that they wouldn't get the disease that other people had. That's God's design. He has some guidelines that He's laid out and His words are *if you obey my guidelines, then none of these diseases will come to you.*

Well these people now their threshold is low, they're exhausted. So they just killed the meat, cook it a little bit, and they're eating it rare. They weren't to eat it rare. They were to cook it thoroughly according to God's word here.

So Saul's going to take some action here as the king and this is good action that he takes. I would suggest that a wise action of any kind of a leader is to help people be successful when their threshold is low. As you know in our lives sometimes our threshold is low and we all need those people who come alongside of us and say, "Hey, let me help you do this. Let's do this the right way." So we come alongside of people in order to help them.

So here's what Saul says as we continue on in verse 33. *"You have broken faith," he said. "Roll a large stone over here at once." Then he said, "Go out among the men and tell them, 'Each of you bring me your cattle and sheep, and slaughter them here and eat them. Do not sin against the Lord by eating meat with blood still in it.'" So everyone brought his ox that night and slaughtered it there.*

Now an ox would serve at least 100 people, maybe 200 people. A sheep maybe would serve thirty people. So they're binging all these animals, killing them, and then cooking them thoroughly there. Saul is equipping them to be able to do that.

A great application for us, certainly if you have children. When kids are tired, or when they're hungry, their threshold is low, sometimes we have to come alongside of them to help them to do what's right. Even when their threshold is low. But it's not just kids. Sometimes husbands and wives need that companion to come alongside them and help them do the right thing. It's friends that we have that help us do what's right.

So Saul here does a good thing. I really like it. But the next verse is a very interesting verse to me that gives us an illustration or an understanding about Saul. I think it's the key to the whole passage and will provide the application that I take away from this passage today and I hope you will too.

Verse 35 says this: *Then Saul built an altar to the Lord; it was the first time he had done this.* Now isn't that interesting. It's a good thing that he built an altar to the Lord, but it's the first time that he did it. Now a lot of things have happened in Saul's life up to this point, but this is the first time he's offering an altar or building an altar before the Lord? I think that's a mistake. Just illustrating the fact that he doesn't recognize his own need for God and to come close to Him and have that altar inside of him, or build the altar that he can come close to the Lord. It's a good thing, but he didn't do it enough.

It's my responsibility to build an altar to the Lord inside of my heart so that when I experience anxiety and pain and confusion and anger and frustration, that I can then come to the altar and lay it at the altar as a sacrifice for the Lord and allow the Lord to burn it up as a burnt offering before Him, allow Him to reprove me and to purify and refine me because I'm putting it on the altar. When I'm successful and happy and joyful and things are going well, I need to bring those things to the altar and I need to lay them out as a peace offering before the Lord so that God can be honored and blessed in the midst of that and God can do some good things.

So we continually come before the altar in our own hearts and we say, "God, I want you to work inside of me. I want you to do this deeper work in my life." I want to encourage you to become or be more altar conscience. In the course of your day, you're saying, "This is one of those things I need to come before the Lord."

The New Testament uses these words that are puzzling to us sometimes where it says *pray without ceasing*. You're going, "How can I do that?" It's this sense of always having this presence of God inside, always coming and having that altar inside that we're coming before the Lord regularly.

Now sometimes structures are helpful for us to do that. The Bible reading plan that we're doing together, I encourage you to be working on that with us in 2017. We're reading through the Bible in a year. On my phone I have the app. It's called Scripture Reading. That's the app for the Bible reading. It's called Scripture Reading. It has videos to watch for each chapter. It has chapters to read and a psalm every day. It's right there on the app. It's just a great way to get a handle on God's word and understand it.

It's designed in a way to be a spiritual experience every day. So it even starts at the beginning of the app if you look at it – Take a deep breath and enter into the presence of God, before you start reading. I really like the way they do it. It's just a spiritual experience before God, not just a rote thing. It's a structure. Structures often allow us to be reminded to come in and have that altar before the Lord.

If you want to be successful in your life (I'm not just talking about money, I'm talking about relationships and other things), you want to have that altar present inside where you're coming before the Lord regularly and touching your heart to His heart. If you want to have a successful marriage, then you have to spend time praying together, sharing spiritually, serving the Lord together – that altar that's present between you.

If you want to have a successful family, you're going to have a family altar, we call it sometimes. An opportunity for your family to get together, pray, read the Bible, have some fun with the Bible so that we're experiencing that spirituality together. That's what it means to have this altar. We need those altars in our lives.

Saul didn't do it enough. You see the writer wants us to know that this was a first time that he's done this. It doesn't seem to be his common practice.

So verse 36 says – *Saul said, “Let us go down and pursue the Philistines by night and plunder them till dawn, and let us not leave one of them alive.”*

“Do whatever seems best to you,” they replied. But the priest said, “Let us inquire of God here.” I just think this is really interesting. Here we are again. Mistake number three. Saul says, “I’ve got an idea. Let’s go do this.” And the priest says, “Hey, don’t you think we ought to consult the Lord here?” And Saul says, “Oh yeah. I forgot about that. Yeah, we should do that.” Same problem you see. It’s mistake number three. He says, “I’ve got a good idea,” and the priest says, “Let’s seek the Lord.” So verse 37 Saul says, “Okay, we better do that. That is a good idea.”

Just a reminder for us and some grace for us because we do the same thing, don’t we. “Oh yeah, I didn’t have my quiet time today. Oh yeah, I need to spend time with the Lord.”

So Saul asked God, “Shall I go down and pursue the Philistines? (very specific question) Will you give them into Israel’s hand?” Great question. *But God did not answer him that day.* Why isn’t God answering his prayer? I think it’s a great question. By the way, if you’re praying to the Lord and you feel like He’s not answering your prayer, generally I would suggest the answer is this: Go back and start doing the thing He already told you to do and then keep doing that until He reveals something new for you. But in this case, Saul is asking the question of God and he’s not getting an answer. He knows that he should be getting an answer but no answer is coming. So he knows that’s a problem.

Verse 38 says – *Saul therefore said, “Come here, all you who are leaders of the army, and let us find out what sin has been committed today.* We do know that one of the reasons that God doesn’t answer a prayer is because there’s sin that’s blocking us from access to the answer. Not that God can’t hear the prayer, but sin is blocking the answer and it’s not coming to us.

Verse 39 – *As surely as the Lord who rescues Israel lives, even if the guilt lies with my son Jonathan, he must die.”* *But not one of them said a word.* You realize the reason he’s saying that is because Jonathan is the one who’s made the error. His dad said, on oath, don’t eat any food, but Jonathan has done that.

The reason *not one of them said a word* is because no one wants to speak out against Jonathan who’s just created this tremendous attack on the army and initiated God’s kingdom plan and great things are taking progress against the enemy. It’s great. But Saul makes this rash statement that the guilty person must die. That’s what he’s doing. Of course we know that Jonathan is the guilty person. When we make rash statements like this, it gets us into trouble.

In verse 40 we’ll see how this develops. *Saul then said to all the Israelites, “You stand over there; I and Jonathan my son will stand over here.”*

“Do what seems best to you,” they replied. Then Saul prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, “Why have you not answered your servant today? If the fault is in me or my son Jonathan, respond with Urim, but if the men of Israel are at fault, respond with Thummim.”

We don't have this today, but we are told about it in the Old Testament. It was one of God's ways of helping to determine His will. So they were these two rocks or jewels or something that were put into the pocket of the ephod of the priest, and so it was part of what he wore. He would pull them out and they could be used to flip a coin or roll the dice or something like that. If they came up a certain way, that was the answer, yes and no. The Urim and the Thummin is what they were called. So if it comes up this one way it's Jonathan and Saul; if it comes up the other way it's the other people. So they do that.

It says – *Jonathan and Saul were taken by lot, and the men were cleared.* So it obviously came up between Jonathan and Saul. *Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and Jonathan my son." And Jonathan was taken.* So now it's revealed that Jonathan is the one who disobeyed the king's order here. Verse 43 – *Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done."*

So Jonathan told him, "I tasted a little honey with the end of my staff. And now I must die!" I don't know whether to put a question mark on there. Now I must die? I'm not sure how to phrase that. But "you've got to be kidding me" is what I'm imagining it saying there. This is ridiculous. God is working. The leader is messing up and because of that other people are suffering.

Notice verse 44. *Saul said, "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if you do not die, Jonathan."* I would suggest that the fourth mistake that Saul makes right here is that he isn't humble enough to admit that he made a mistake. He sticks to his oath instead of admitting he was wrong. Because of that, other people in his life are going to step in and correct the situation. He's the king, but he's basically going to get corrected by all the people that are around.

Notice verse 45 and we'll see how this resolves itself, because killing Jonathan is not part of the solution. I think it's a mistake that Saul made to create the oath. He was acting irrationally, he wasn't connecting to the Lord, and he's making a mistake.

Verse 45 – *But the men said to Saul, "Should Jonathan die—he who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? Never! As surely as the Lord lives, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground, for he did this today with God's help."* So the men rescued Jonathan, and he was not put to death. Other people could see that Saul had made a mistake so they stepped in and they defended and rescued Jonathan.

Verse 46 – *Then Saul stopped pursuing the Philistines, and they withdrew to their own land.*

Now we have some summary statements. Let me read them then we'll conclude with some application for ourselves.

Verse 47 – *After Saul had assumed rule over Israel, he fought against their enemies on every side: Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment on them. He fought valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, delivering Israel from the hands of those who had plundered them.*

Saul's sons were Jonathan, Ishvi and Malki-Shua. The name of his older daughter was Merab, and that of the younger was Michal. His wife's name was Ahinoam daughter of Ahimaaz. The

name of the commander of Saul's army was Abner son of Ner, and Ner was Saul's uncle. Saul's father Kish and Abner's father Ner were sons of Abiel.

And then verse 52 – *All the days of Saul there was bitter war with the Philistines, and whenever Saul saw a mighty or brave man, he took him into his service.* I like that statement because I believe that's the success of any of us. We want to make friends with people who are mighty men. I'm not just saying successful people. I'm talking about people who have their act together with the Lord. When we make friends with those people, they contribute to the influence around us.

I think that's great. I like to do that myself. I can find people who are serving the Lord, who are loving the Lord. I want them to be closest to me as I'm trying to make decisions. I want their influence involved in my life as I'm trying to make decisions. Not just about myself, but at the church or any of the other things I'm involved in.

That's what he's saying here. He found these mighty men and he took them into his service. I think it was a good idea and it may be the reason he lasted as long as he did. He had good people surrounding him and helping him to make some good decisions.

Saul's a mixture of good and bad. We can see here he makes four significant mistakes, all tied into this one idea, I think, which is the idea of the altar. If he had spent more time at the altar, he spent more time asking the Lord what do I do here, allowing the priest to help him determine God's will, all of those things, he would've been more successful.

I think we can say this, and I'm sure you'll all agree with this. The closer I am to the Lord and the more I let the Lord and His work affect my life, the more successful I will be in my life. Define success however you want to define it, I'm just talking about being able to live a life that has peace, love, joy, those things that God could have for us in our own hearts. The closer we live to the Lord, the closer we're obeying Him, the closer we're doing those things, the more effective we'll be in our lives. Which means we need to go back to the altar. We need to spend time.

Just think about how you might do that in your own life. What structures could you set up in your life? Tim told me last week that with the scripture reading app there is an email that comes. You can sign up that the Bible project comes to your email every day. He likes that structure. It comes in to his email. He can see here's what I need to do, it's got links to the video, it's got links to the Bible reading for the day. It's a structure. Structures help us to stay close to the Lord. Structures are not the Lord, and if we start focusing on the structures without the Lord then they become pharisaical and they become the structures. So we always have to be testing the structures. Are they drawing me to the Lord?

I would suggest that many of us need those structures in order to bring us to that reminder everyday. We say, "Boy, I need to spend time with the Lord today before I go forward and do this," or "I need to ask the Lord for His grace and His work in my life today." That's the altar.

Certainly we come to the altar on a Sunday morning. When we come forward we often call that coming forward to the altar. I think that's true because this is the sanctuary of God in the sense of a church having a sanctuary. But there's this sense in which God has taught us in His word that we are the sanctuary of God. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. So in the temple there's this altar and so inside of us we need to have the altar where we go, where we're consulting the Lord. That is that special place.

I told you in my own life I call this an internal staff meeting that I like to have inside of me where I get together all the different roles of my life, I meet with the Lord, and kind of lay out my different roles as a dad, what are all the different things that I do. Then I kind of test them before the Lord. Lord, what do you want me to do in the midst of it. That is the essence of the altar.

Whatever it looks like for you, come before the altar of the Lord regularly and allow Him to speak to you so you don't fall into the mistakes that Saul fell into. He just seems to be a confused person, a confused leader randomly going here or there, not having a clear direction like Jonathan did moving forward. It goes back to the altar. We want to be people who are directed by the Lord and close to the Lord. I trust that God will speak into your heart and show you ways that you can do that in your own life.

Would you stand with me? Let's pray together

[PRAYER] Lord, I thank you that you have called us to be living sacrifices. It is true that as living sacrifices we tend to crawl off the altar in our own hearts and we need to keep putting ourselves back on there and sacrificing ourselves to you. Lord, take the pride and the anger and the anxiety and depression, and the things that hinder us from moving forward. We sacrifice them now on that altar before you and we ask that you would replace them with that joy, with that encouragement, with that peace that we can have because we know you. Lord, we want to have that fellowship regularly and we thank you that you allowed us to experience who you are in a very personal way by being our heavenly Father. In Jesus' name, amen.