

With wings *of an eagle*

Part 7 of 12

King Saul

Wanting to be POPULAR!





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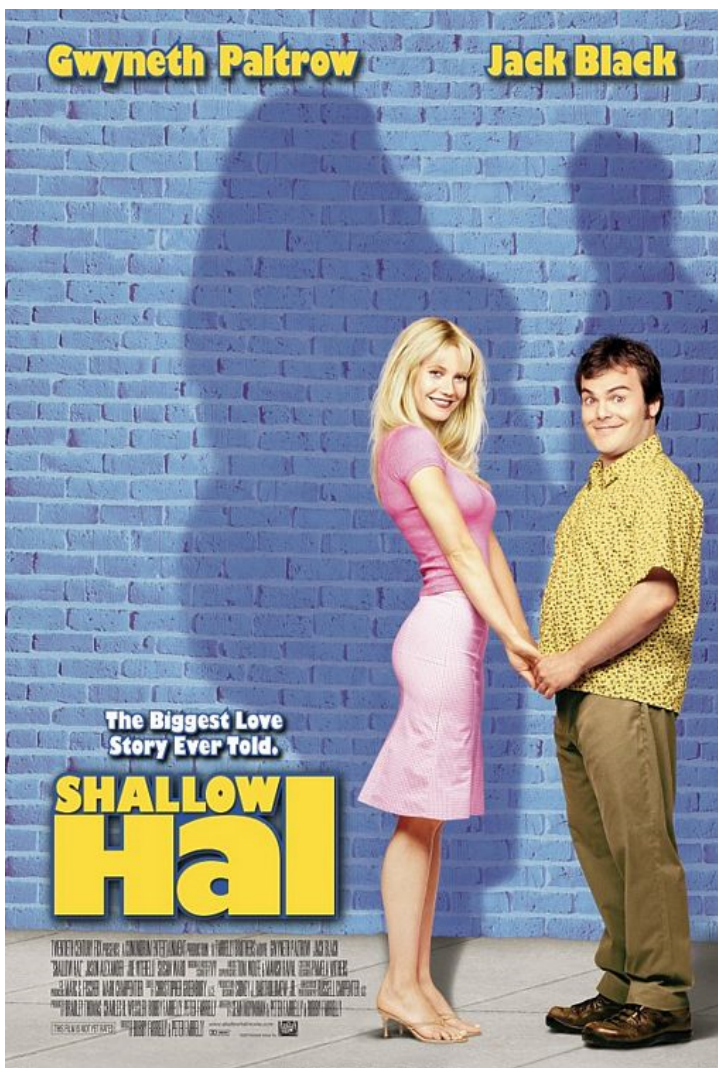
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Welcome to our 7th interact Bible workshop – With Wings of an Eagle, looking at King Saul and the risk of Wanting to be Popular!

Today's Bible Workshop is interactive, in that I will be asking you to input and ask questions, interacting with each other, with the Bible and with the Spirit of God in our midst.

Just a reminder that full printed booklets of the entire sermon are freely available from the foyer – before the service begins each week.



Slide # 02 – Shallow Hal poster

I'm sure we've all seen or heard about the movie – Shallow Hal.

It's a story about a guy who was – well – shallow!

He was more concerned about the *outward* appearance, and being popular.

Through a series of events, something changed that caused Hal to see people as *they really*

were on the inside, and not just the outward appearance.

What was unusual about the story, is that the girl Shallow Hal fell in love with, was not the kind of girl he would normally be attracted to.

It's a movie all about the true inner character that is more than just skin deep.

It is about wanting to be popular, and being attracted only to those things in life that boost *our* self image and pride.

And while it is true that we never get a second chance at a first impression, it is also equally true that you can't judge a book by its cover.

Well – at least not *all* the time :-)

Slide # 03 – 3 sentences below

(Abiding principles)

1. Here's the thing about being a Shallow Hall – is that the desire for recognition and being popular among people – will eventually put you at odds with God Himself.
2. We need to learn *never* to follow a leader based solely on their skills and giftings – focus instead (check/test) on their character, history and family situation.
3. Can somebody explain what False Pride is? (When we think our abilities and skills are greater than they really are.)
However, false pride is also when we undervalue our skills and abilities, when we fail to recognise, accept and use them!

You see, unlike God – we don't have the ability to see into the future or into the past of a person's life.

All we have is the *here and now* – especially if we haven't known them for very long.

Many times we pre-judge people – based purely on what they *look* like or who they *remind* us of.

This can be as true about new believers, as it can about our choice of Prime Minister.

Wanting to be popular is nothing new, in fact following the period of the Judges in the Old Testament, the people of God wanted to be like the *neighbouring* countries.

They cried out for a king like the nations around them.
(1 Samuel 8:1-5)

They wanted someone larger than life – with an impressive appearance and a charismatic personality.

They wanted to be popular and look the same as those around them, rather than develop their own character and uniqueness.

God reluctantly granted them their persistent request, setting His approval on the tall, strong, handsome young man that the people found so appealing.

And so – *Saul* became Israel's first King.

God gave him His Spirit, and God actually *changed* his heart for the better!

But – soon Saul got carried away with his official power and gradually changed *back* to who he was to begin with.

Actually, he became *worse*.

Saul was driven by the desire to be *in charge*, to be *noticed*, to be *somebody* special.

The end result of *anyone* with such a personality and desire is best summed up on the words of Saul himself near the end of his life:

Surely I have acted like a fool, and have made many mistakes!
(1 Samuel 26:21)

Let's open God's holy word and read several verses from the book of 1st Samuel.

As we interact with the Bible, let's first list Saul's *natural* talents:

1 Samuel 9:1-2

1 ¶ There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin.

2 He had a son named Saul, an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites—a head taller than any of the others.

Slide # 04

What was one of Saul's natural talents or gifts?

It is interesting that Saul, or Shaul in Hebrew means 'to be desired'! The Hebrew describes Saul as pleasant to behold, attractive and youthful – full of energy and potential!

Slide # 06

Now, let's look at the supernatural power and gifts given to him by God!

1 Samuel 10:6

The Spirit of the LORD (Remember – when in CAPITALS in your NIV – it means Jehovah/Yahweh – the LORD of LORDS!) will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person.

God gave him the power to prophesy – which in OT days was the ability to see into the future and predict.

In the OT prophecy was to fore-tell.

In the NT, prophecy is to forth-tell.

God transformed him into a *new* and *different* person!

Slide # 07

Form this next verse, share another insight about Saul's giftings

1 Samuel 10:7

Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.

God gave him divine grace and wisdom. The ability to act with confidence. Sounds like Augustine's 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind, then do whatever you want – for God is with you!'

Slide # 08 – What about his ability to influence others?

1 Samuel 10:26

Saul also went to his home in Gibeah, accompanied by valiant men whose hearts God had touched.

Saul had the gift and ability to gather men around him. He was a visionary, able to lead and get others to follow him.

Slide # 09

From this verse in 1 Samuel 11:5-6, what other gifts or passions did he possess?

1 Samuel 11:5-6

Just then Saul was returning from the fields, behind his oxen, and he asked, "What is wrong with the people? Why are they weeping?"

Then they repeated to him what the men of Jabesh had said.

6 When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he burned with anger.

He was touched and moved by the Spirit of God. He has a holy zeal and passion for God and His people!

Slide # 10

Now – let's look at :

The *Profile* of King Saul

Saul was chosen and appointed as king by God – yet he slowly forgot who his ultimate King was, and began to rely on his *own* popularity among his people.

Let's trace the *downward spiral* in Saul's life by looking at a few verses.

1 Samuel 10:1-10

Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him, saying, "Has not the LORD anointed you leader over his inheritance?"

2 When you leave me today, you will meet two men... They will say to you, 'The donkeys you set out to look for have been found. And now your father has stopped thinking about them and is worried about you. He is asking, "What shall I do about my son?"'

3 "Then you will go on from there until you reach ...three men going up to God at Bethel.

5 "After that you will go to Gibeah of God. ...you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying.

6 The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person.

7 Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.

8 "Go down ahead of me to Gilgal. I will surely come down to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but you must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do."

9 ¶ As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day.

10 When they arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him; the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying.

Slide # 11

Describe briefly to me, the significant events of this passage – what transpired between God, Samuel and Saul?

God placed a definite call upon Saul's life, and confirmed it through others. God miraculously changed Saul's heart and life!

1 Samuel 13:1-12

Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel for forty-two years.

2 (Two years into his reign) Saul chose three thousand men from Israel... The rest of the men he sent back to their homes.

3 Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul had the trumpet blown throughout the land and said, "Let the Hebrews hear!"

4 So all Israel heard the news: "Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost, and now Israel has become an offence to the Philistines." And the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal.

5 The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

6 When the men of Israel saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns.

7 Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan... Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear.

8 ¶ He waited for seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter.

9 So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering.

10 Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him.

11 "What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash,

12 I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favour.' So I felt *compelled* to offer the burnt offering."

13 "You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time.

Slide # 12

Tell me what happened in this passage, and what went wrong.

Clearly, Saul took matters into his own hands – in several ways. Notice in verse 3 that Saul calls for the Hebrews, not the Israelites! His demise took only 24months!!!!

1 Samuel 15:1-9

Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the LORD.

2 This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt.

3 Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.'

4 So Saul summoned the men and mustered them at Telaim—two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men from Judah.

5 Saul went to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the ravine.

6 Then he said to the Kenites, "Go away, leave the Amalekites so that I do not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.

7 Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, to the east of Egypt.

8 He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword.

9 But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs— everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

Slide # 13 – What pattern can you see developing in the heart, character and actions of Saul?

A pattern seems to be developing where Saul feels he is above the commands of God through the prophet and can do his own thing. He reneges on God. Perhaps he has a lust for the fine things in life?

1 Samuel 28:1-7

In those days the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, "You must understand that you and your men will accompany me in the army."

2 David said, "Then you will see for yourself what your servant can do." Achish replied, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in his own town of Ramah. Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land.

4 The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all the Israelites and set up camp at Gilboa.

5 When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart.

6 He enquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets.

7 ¶ Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go and enquire of her." "There is one in Endor," they said.

Slide # 14 – To what depths is Saul now plummeting, and why?

Saul no longer had a Samuel in his life – a mentor, guide and father figure. He now relied on the superstition of the people instead of the true God.

Slide # 15

Samuel, in 1 Samuel 15:17 – makes a brief, passing statement that contains a vital clue to Saul's downfall.

What is it, and why is it so vital?

Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel.

It was in humility and lowliness of his own worth that Saul was appointed and prepared for Kingship. It was therefore in trusting in his own strength and abilities that he became proud and fell.

Sometimes we all try to justify our actions by a veneer of spirituality. Allow me to read you several verses and then tell me how Saul tries to rationalize his own ambition and sin using this tactic.

1 Samuel 15:12 Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honour and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal."

13 When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions."

14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?"

15 Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."

16 "Stop!" Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night." "Tell me," Saul replied.

17 Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel.

18 And he sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.'

19 Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?"

20 "But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king.

21 The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal."

Slide # 16 – What excuses did Saul now use to justify his actions and sin?

He blamed others for his own actions. He took the credit for their success, but was not strong enough to take credit for their failures, or to disappoint them by not allowing them to take the plunder.

Slide # 17

Finally, there is clear evidence for the motivation that caused the downward spiral of Saul.

1 Samuel 13:11-12

"What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash,

12 I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favour.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering."

1 Samuel 15:30

Saul replied, "I have sinned. But please honour me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God."

Slide # 18 – What can we see as the main motivation that caused king Saul's demise?

It appears Saul lost control of his own emotions and actions, he was compelled. He also wanted popularity above all else. He wanted to be honoured and this compelled him to do things he thought were right, but were not.

Slide # 19

Let's recap and learn from Saul

Saul began his career with a sense of awe at what God had done in selecting him to be the first king of Israel.

It was a real honor, and to start with – Saul was grateful.

But slowly he adopted an exaggerated view of his own importance and skill.

And in doing so, he lost sight of a vital principle.: No matter what the position, a child of God is first and foremost a servant of God.

After a while, Saul was merely going through the motions of spirituality and kingship, because he had forgotten the source of his strength and wisdom.

He wanted the praise of men rather than the praise of God.

He forgot that once he was *small in his own eyes*, and instead grew to enjoy being *big in the eyes* of others.

The story of Saul is more than a historical and even biblical account of pride and popularity coming before a fall.’

It is an illustration of a negative tendency within many of us here today.

We like to be appreciated, and sometimes we like it too much – preferring the praise and popularity of people – above God.

We need to be aware of the foxes that nibble at the vines, and in this case watch in ourselves and our children the desire for popularity – because although it may appear harmless at first, if left to grow will result into the bitter fruit of pride and arrogance.

Slide # 20

Memory Verses:

1st Samuel 15:24

Then he confessed, "I have sinned. I have ignored God's Word and the godly instructions of others. I cared more about pleasing the people rather than pleasing God.

Mark 9:35

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."

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