



## Small Group Questions Sunday 25/09/22

### Series: Spiritual Heart Surgery (through 1 Samuel)

### Sermon: 1 Samuel 5 The Heart of Worship

Read 1 Samuel 4

#### Background

In last's week's passage Samuel prophesied against the house of Eli the priest – because of the sins of his son's Hophni and Phinehas, and Eli's failure to restrain their sin within the temple of God. And then in chapter 4, there is a battle between Israel and the Philistines – about 4000 of the Israelite soldiers are killed... so the elders say, 'let's bring the ark of the Lord's covenant with us next time...'

Hophni and Phinehas (the ones who had abused their power as priests of the Lord, who had desecrated the temple with sexual immorality, and theft, and greed) walk with the ark of the covenant of God... So of course, Samuel's prophesy is fulfilled... they are killed in battle, and the ark of the Covenant is taken captive by the Philistines... Eli the priest when he hears the news, falls off his chair backwards and breaks his neck. Chapter 4 ends with the naming of a child, Phinehas's wife names the boy 'Ichabod' saying:

*'The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.'* (1 Samuel 4:22)

#### The Ark of the Covenant

Described as a wooden chest, covered in pure gold, with an elaborately designed lid called the mercy seat. According to the Book of Exodus, the Ark contained the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. According to Hebrews, it also contained Aaron's rod and a pot of manna.



#### Discuss:

- There has been a growing awareness in our culture of power and oppression, of intersectionality... that web of oppression in terms of class, race and gender. There have been many occasions in recent years in both the secular and spiritual world, where the abuse of power has been exposed.
- Is this something that we as Christians need to learn from and be aware of? In what ways?
- Are we aware of the power that we hold in our personal lives?
- What does it look like to hold power with humility?

**Read:** 1 Samuel 5

Here we have Yahweh fulfilling what is said about Him in Scripture, and what is sung by Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:2 'There is no one holy, like the Lord, there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.'

**The Hand in the Hebrew bible is a symbol of power.**

The hands of the enemy have been severed... and the hand of Yahweh – the power of Yahweh, is now heavy upon the people of Ashdod... This is a great reversal of power

**The temple of Dagon, the place of defeat, becomes the arena of Yahweh's SOVEREIGNTY AND POWER TO BE REVEALED.**

**Discuss**

Share with one another testimonies of times when places of defeat in your own lives have become arenas for God's sovereignty and power to be revealed. 1 Corinthians 12:9

**Pause and Pray:** Take some time to pray and give thanks for these things.

**Read:** 1 Samuel 6

The maternal instincts of the cows pulling the cart should have caused them to head straight back to their suckling calves... But verse 12 tells us; 'the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left.'

Song of Solomon speaks of God's eyes being like doves (5:12) that is, eyes that can only look forward (Doves have no peripheral vision). God, in this passage journeys straight back to His people, he doesn't look to the right or the left – his heart is set on them.

**Yahweh returns to the ones who betrayed Him.**

**This story echoes that of Jesus** – betrayed by his friends, captured, stripped, humiliated, seemingly defeated, dead and buried in a tomb... But, by His great power He defeats death itself. And then, the resurrected Jesus returns to the ones who betrayed him.

**Discuss**

In what ways do we betray Jesus?

In our relationship with God, do we have a proper view of his power?

In our relationship with God, do we have a proper view of his love?

In what ways can we overcome our indifference to all that God has done for us?

**PRAY**

You make like to take some time with God in repentance and also in praise and thankfulness.