

THINGS TO STOP AND START STUDY SIX

Stop Resisting and Start Submitting

1 Samuel 15:1–23

A defiant spirit is never from the Lord. Resisting God's will is never appropriate or acceptable. Choosing to go our own way is never pleasing to God.

—Charles R. Swindoll

THE young rebels of the 1960s expressed their defiant attitude toward the older generation with slogans like, “Don’t Trust Anyone over 30!” and “Question Authority!” These days, this rebellious attitude has spread beyond the youth to almost every level of our society . . . and intensified. Angry defiance is not only tolerated, it’s defended and encouraged.

Granted, some leaders abuse their power. We need to stand up to bullies and tyrants who deny basic human rights or take away religious freedom. However, there’s a difference between standing for what’s right and having a fight-back attitude toward everyone in charge—for no other reason than to get our way.

King Saul bears the infamous reputation in the Old Testament as one who resisted the very God who had appointed him king of Israel. Where David is known as a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22), Saul could rightly be labeled a man after *Saul’s* own heart. Just look at his track record of rebellion.

In 1 Samuel 13, Saul defiled God’s holy standard by offering a sacrifice himself, rather than waiting for the prophet Samuel to do it (1 Samuel 13:8–9). In 1 Samuel 14, prideful Saul made an impulsive vow that nearly cost his son’s life (14:24–25). In 1 Samuel 15, God instructed Saul to defeat Israel’s enemies, the Amalekites, but he only partially obeyed. Why did Saul resist God’s authority again and again?

In this study of 1 Samuel 15:1–23, we’ll examine Saul’s “my way” mind-set that fueled his resistance. And we’ll uncover the subtle ways that we, too, rationalize our sin and justify our compromises. Our goal is to learn from Saul’s negative example so that we can *stop resisting and start submitting* to God’s authority.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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1 Samuel 15:1–23



PREPARE YOUR HEART

It can be difficult to see the truth about ourselves. The prophet Jeremiah declared, “the human heart is the most deceitful of all things” (Jeremiah 17:9). Only the Lord can “search all hearts and examine secret motives” (17:10).

Take a few moments for quiet prayer and invite God to search your heart as you study the account of Saul’s self-deceit and sin. Ask the Lord to reveal to you your secret motives, to illumine for you His path of righteousness, and to give you a heart to serve Him.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Read *1 Samuel 15:1–23*, and as you read, notice the following outline: God instructs (1 Samuel 15:1–6); Saul disobeys (15:7–9); Samuel confronts (15:10–21); and Samuel teaches (15:22–23).



Observation: A Classic Example of Carnal Rebellion

A key principle in the *Searching the Scriptures* process is observation.¹ As you look back through 1 Samuel 15:1–23, can you observe any repetitive words or themes? Specifically, notice the word *destroy* or *destroyed* in verses 8, 9, 15, 18, and 20. Also find the passage’s central themes: “obey” in verses 10, 19, 20, and 22; and “sacrifice” in verses 15, 21, and 22.



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Clear Instruction from the Lord—1 Samuel 15:1–6

What instructions from the Lord did Samuel give to Saul (*1 Samuel 15:1–3*)?

What grievous crime had the Amalekites committed to warrant God's severe judgment, and what instructions did Moses issue regarding the Amalekites (*Deuteronomy 25:17–19*)?

In what other ways did the Amalekites attack Israel (*Judges 6:3–5*)?

After centuries of the Amalekites tormenting the Israelites, God decided enough was enough. It was time for Israel to put an end to their enemy.



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Incomplete Obedience of the King—1 Samuel 15:7–9

The Commander-in-Chief had given direct orders: “completely destroy” (1 Samuel 15:3) and “do not spare him” (15:3 NASB). But what, in fact, did Saul do (15:7–9)?

Saul spared King Agag and the premium livestock as trophies to honor his victory. Although Saul later claimed he kept the best for the Lord (15:15, 21), the king’s *secret* motivation was his own fame. What did Saul do immediately after the victory that revealed his primary motive (15:12)?

Years earlier, Moses’ first act after defeating the Amalekites was to build an altar to the Lord and proclaim, “Yahweh-Nissi (which means ‘the LORD is my banner’)” (Exodus 17:15). Saul’s first act after his victory over the Amalekites was to erect a monument to himself!

The human heart is deceitful above all things! Even Saul couldn’t see the pride lurking inside . . . at least, not until he viewed himself in Samuel’s mirror of truth.

Strong Confrontation and Weak Responses—1 Samuel 15:10–21

As you observe the verses in this section, notice the contrast between Samuel’s grieving and Saul’s gloating, between Samuel’s brokenness over sin and Saul’s blindness toward it.



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What did Samuel say to confront Saul, and how did Saul defend himself (1 Samuel 15:10–15)?

In his self-delusion, Saul had convinced himself that he was serving God by *disobeying* Him! Such is the deceptive power of rationalization. According to *Merriam-Webster*, *rationalization* is “a way of describing, interpreting, or explaining something (such as bad behavior) that makes it seem proper.”²

Saul tried to make it “seem proper” to spare King Agag and the best animals. What facts did Samuel give to open Saul’s eyes to Saul’s sin? And how did Saul try to rationalize his actions again (15:16–21)?

Samuel asked, “Why haven’t you obeyed the LORD?” (15:19). That’s a penetrating question for all of us, isn’t it? What is the *real* reason we disobey?

Saul concealed his pride behind his spiritual-sounding plan to sacrifice the animals to God. God, however, saw through his religious façade to his secret pride, and He sees our true motives even when we hide them behind a show of spirituality. Samuel’s lesson for Saul is the same for us—namely, only through obeying God do we truly honor Him.



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Interpretation: Samuel Teaches a Lesson for All of Us

In the interpretation phase, we examine the meaning of the biblical account—which Samuel provides in his concluding lesson. What lesson did Samuel teach Saul, as well as the nation, about obedience as the true measure of our devotion to God (*1 Samuel 15:22–23*)?

What is the link between rebellion and witchcraft and between stubbornness and idolatry (*15:23*)? For help, you may wish to consult a commentary. For an online resource, you can read Constable's Notes on this verse at NETBible.org.

Can you summarize Samuel's teaching by writing a *principle*? A principle is an “eternal truth” that applies to all people at all times, not just the biblical author's audience in his day.



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It's always wrong to disobey the living God. To put all of that in two simple words, I call it "carnal rebellion." It's the opposite of genuine humility, the kind of submissive spirit modeled by none other than Jesus Christ. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Warning and Directives

Can we find this principle on obedience from 1 Samuel 15 elsewhere in Scripture? Read the following verses and write down the spiritual truths they teach.

James 4:10

1 Peter 5:5

If only Saul had trusted God to exalt him rather than trying to exalt himself, Saul's life may have turned out differently. The prideful king spent the rest of his years floundering in paranoia, afraid of losing the crown, and unwilling to submit to the Lord. He bowed to circumstances, he bowed to himself, he even bowed to others. But he refused to bow to God.



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Application: Progressing from Resistance to Submission

How can we and those we love avoid the pitfalls that Saul experienced? First, we can train our children or grandchildren while they're young to submit to authority. Children need loving limits and boundaries, and when they resist a parent's authority, they need correction. Discipline tells our children that their parents love them too much to let them rebel (*Proverbs 13:24*).

What can you do to help your children learn obedience?

Second, as children of God, we can all learn to submit to our heavenly Father's authority. Just as parents show love through correction, so God disciplines those He loves because He knows the security and joy we will experience when we submit to His will (*Hebrews 12:10–11*).

Can you identify any ways you might be resisting God's authority? In what areas might you be following Saul's "my-way" example instead of Christ's example when He prayed to the Father, "I want your will to be done, not mine" (Luke 22:42)?



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A FINAL PRAYER

We close this study with a prayer of surrender to the Lord written by Dwight L. Moody. May his words give voice to your fervent desire to let God rule your life.

Use me then, my Savior, for whatever purpose, and in whatever way, you may require. Here is my poor heart, an empty vessel; fill it with your grace. Here is my sinful and troubled soul; quicken it and refresh it with your love. Take my heart for your abode; my mouth to spread abroad the glory of your name; my love and all my powers, for the advancement of your believing people; and never suffer the steadfastness and confidence of my faith to abate; so that at all times I may be enabled from the heart to say, “Jesus needs me, and I am his.”³

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, “*How to Study the Bible for Yourself*.”
2. *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rationalization>, see “rationalization.”
3. Dwight L. Moody, as quoted in *The One Year Book of Personal Prayer* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1991), 9.



THINGS TO STOP AND START

STUDY SIX

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

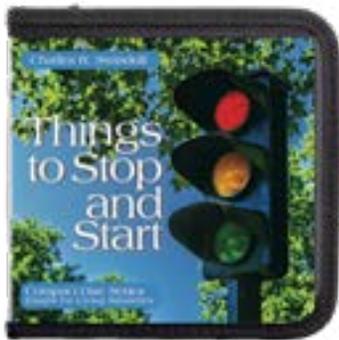
STUDY

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For the 2019–2020 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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