

THE TRUTH ABOUT SELF-DECEPTION

1 SAMUEL 15:1-35

CHURCH GROUP SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE - AUGUST 16, 2026

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Samuel 15:1-35 (ESV)

REACH ONE

REACH ONE - Getting to know people and helping people get to know Jesus.

As we continue growing in the habit of intentionally going out of our way to see people, carve out some discussion time to let group members share how they took a step toward others during the past week. It does not matter if it was small (e.g., learning their barista's name) or large (e.g., getting to share Jesus with someone), celebrating wins like these can go a long way into making this part of our daily rhythms and lifestyle.

SERMON RECAP

You have been unfaithful to God. Saul's life and rule was ruined because he refused to face the truth about himself. This passage in 1 Samuel 15 shows us how self-deception is easy, how self-deception is deadly, and how we escape it:

- Self-deception often shows up as willful ignorance.
- Self-deception often shows up as convenient comparison.
- Self-deception often shows up as religious rebranding.

Self-deception makes us feel better about ourselves and keeps us in the delusion that leads to spiritual death.

You will only be able to resist self-deception when you rest in the grace of God. You will stop using self-deception to protect your identity when you rest in the identity that God has given you. God has given you an opportunity to find your identity in His grace, not in your performance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Observation: What does this passage say?

1. Read 1 Samuel 15:1-35 aloud as a group. Before interpreting or applying the passage, share observations about it.
 - Who were the main characters in this passage, and what were their roles?
 - What word did the LORD send to Saul through the prophet Samuel?
 - What actions did Saul take in response to the LORD's command?
 - What actions did Saul fail to take in response to the LORD's command?
 - What was the prophet Samuel's response to Saul's actions and inactions?
 - What was the LORD's ultimate response to Saul's choices (vv. 22-23, 26b, 28-29, 35b)?
2. How would you explain or summarize today's passage in your own words?

Interpretation: What does the passage mean?

1. Saul tried to hide his sin (vv. 13, 15), compare himself to others (vv. 17-21), and cover His disobedience with religious activity (v. 21). Yet, the LORD had spoken long before about what He truly desired from the nation of Israel. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-6, Exodus 15:26, and Jeremiah 7:22-23. What does the LORD desire from His people?
2. What did the LORD fundamentally desire from Saul (v. 11b)?
3. What did Saul identify as the source and motivation behind his words and actions (vv. 24, 30)?
4. What had the LORD already provided to/for Saul (vv. 17b-18a)? So, why might Saul have failed to trust and obey the voice of the LORD? What did Saul fail to recognize about the LORD? What deficits existed in his understanding about the LORD? What truths from and about the LORD did he deny? How might these deficits and denials have opened the door for Saul's failures?

5. Throughout today's passage, what was the continuous source of, and motivation behind, Samuel's words and actions toward Saul? What scriptural evidence informs your response?

Application: How can we apply this passage to our lives?

1. Today's passage reveals three patterns of self-deception: (a) Willful ignorance, (b) convenient comparison, and (c) religious rebranding. Do you recognize these patterns in yourself? What patterns do you fall into to resist the hard truths about yourself and your sin?
2. Reflect honestly. In the core of your heart, do you self-deceivingly think that your standing with God depends, in any amount, on your faithfulness 'to the LORD' and your performance 'in his name'? Or do you, in true faith, trust and believe that your standing before the LORD depends solely on Christ's finished work?
 - How does your self-deception impoverish (a) the way that you handle correction, and (b) the way that you resist confession before the LORD and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ (James 5:13-16)?
Or—
 - How does your true faith enrich (a) the way that you handle correction, and (b) the way that you engage in confession before the LORD and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ (James 5:13-16)?
3. Who in your life has permission to tell you what is wrong with you? If no one does, why not? This week, who might you ask the following question: "What sin in my life do you see that I am blind to?" What might hinder you from asking that question, and how might you overcome that hindrance?
4. In a dying reflection, and in full and final agreement with the LORD, John Newton (the author of "Amazing Grace") confessed the following: "I am a great sinner, and Christ is a great Savior." Today, we can confess the same, in agreement with the LORD, because of Jesus' full and final victory on the cross. Read Psalm 139. Then, with an open heart before the LORD, confidently dare to pray these words to Him: "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"