

Samuel: Israel's Mentor

By Alan Huesing

“... and I will teach you the way that is good and right” (1 Samuel 12:23 NIV).

(Read 1 Samuel 12)

What was Samuel's position or job in Israel?

What was the occasion for his speech to Israel?

What advice and warning did he give them?

How did God validate his speech to the people?

Israel had just entered a new chapter of her history. They had insulted God by demanding He give them a king to lead and protect them from their enemies (1 Samuel 8). Through Samuel, their priest and His prophet, God had warned them that a king would force taxes and military service on them and their sons and daughters. But they ignored His warnings and insisted on having a king like their neighboring countries. So, God told Samuel that if they wouldn't have it His way, He would have it theirs—and they would pay the consequences. He directed Samuel to anoint Saul, the son of Kish, as their king (1 Samuel 9–10).

As the new king began his reign, Samuel was nearing the end of his ministry among the Israelites. His mission was almost complete. He had served and led them to follow and worship God ever since he was a small boy; first as Eli's helper in the tabernacle (1 Samuel 1–3) and then as their intercessor, judge and deliverer from the Philistines (1 Samuel 7). Now, in his farewell (retirement) speech, Samuel warned Israel of destruction to follow if they continued to disobey God. But he also gave them hope by telling them if they would repent and obey God with all their hearts, His hand would not be against them. Then, to add an exclamation mark to his statements and burn all his words into their hearts and memories, he told them to stand still and see what God had to say. He called on God to send rain (it was the dry season), and God immediately answered with earth-shaking thunder and a downpour that drenched the people. They stood in awe of God and Samuel, realizing that they had offended them both. They confessed their sin and asked for forgiveness.

Their old priest reassured them that God still loved them as His people and would bless them again if they would return and serve Him faithfully with all their hearts. And he committed to pray for them and continue to be their spiritual mentor for the rest of his life.

What gave Samuel credibility to be Israel's mentor? (vv. 3–5)

Now that Israel was starting a new day as God's people, they needed to be mentored and led by God's man.

It's not enough to lead people to faith in Christ; we must follow through by continuing to pray for them and by disciplining them.

What two promises did Samuel make to the people? (v. 23)

Who had been Samuel's mentor early in his life? (1 Samuel 3)

What had Samuel experienced that made him qualified to warn Israel? (1 Samuel 4)

A spiritual mentor must be a consistent example. He must be an example of what God can do in and through a person who commits and trusts his life to God's care and purpose. Samuel had earned the right to speak and to be heard by Israel. He had lived before and among them in such a way that no one could find fault with him. Now that Israel was starting a new day as God's people, they needed to be mentored and led by God's man. They needed his prayers on their behalf and his constant teaching.

New believers need mentors to follow. They need to be disciplined by other believers who are living their lives as faithful followers of Christ. It's not enough to lead people to faith in Christ; we must follow through by continuing to pray for them and by disciplining them. Samuel said that he would be sinning against the Lord if he failed to pray for the Israelites. The same is true now for Christians who bring others into God's family of faith. Spiritual babes can't be left out in the rain to fend for themselves. They have to be fed and cared for.

What is the role of a spiritual mentor?

Like Samuel, a mentor reminds young believers what God has done for them and others in the past.

He points out their sin and warns them of the dangers of disobeying and failing to follow Christ. He holds them accountable for their actions, urges them to listen to God's voice, encourages them and prays for them constantly.

Who has been your spiritual mentor?

Who should you be mentoring and praying for daily?