

The Power of God's Presence and A Call for Repentance

When we feel vulnerable, we naturally seek reassurance. We want to hold onto something tangible for comfort. Throughout the Bible, God promises to be with his people, and many of us find his presence extremely comforting. But what happens when we think of God's presence as something we can manipulate to accomplish what *we* want? The next few chapters in our study of 1 Samuel recount the loss of the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's presence with Israel, the pride of the Philistines turning to panic, and Samuel's call for Israel to repent and return to worshipping the Lord. These chapters offer *us* a warning not to cherish outward symbols of faith without also maintaining our inward, faithful obedience to the Lord. They also invite us to return to the Lord and surrender our hearts to him.

AWARENESS Before listening reflect on what you already know or understand about topics we'll cover in the episode.

- What are some of the outward or visible symbols of faith most Christians cherish today?
- What is an idol? How do we know if we've turned something in our lives into an idol?



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE: [The Power of God's Presence and A Call for Repentance](#)

READ [1 Samuel 4:1-7:6](#)

REFLECTION After listening, consider the following questions:

- By neglecting to engage in spiritual reflection, we risk forgetting that God is holy, sovereign, and will not be forced to do anything. How might Christians today, by moving too quickly from theology to technique, be tempted, like the Israelites, to use religious symbols or practices to try to manipulate God?
- What did you learn about God's power and presence when, after the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant, they put it in the temple of their god, Dagon?
- Hosts Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney noted that Israel's drift away from God to worshipping foreign gods didn't happen overnight; it happened over twenty years. Then Darrell said, "We might not have little statues and little idols hanging around, but we do make them in our hearts; whether it is putting ourselves first or we want God to fix problems and not actually repent. We want God to rescue us from our situation, but we do not want to surrender to his Lordship. We need to do some heart-checking at some point in our lives as well so that we know what God wants from us." Take some time and do that heart-checking. What is the Holy Spirit revealing to you?

- Darrell and Scott listed three truths they drew from this study of [1 Samuel 4:1-7:6](#). First, God is holy and cannot be managed. Second, Religious symbols are not a substitute for surrendered hearts, and third, when God exposes our false securities, it is a severe mercy. When God tears down a lie, it hurts, but it is a mercy...that gives us gospel hope. Which one of these resonated with you most today? Which one convicted you the most?

RELATED PASSAGES for further study

[Exodus 20](#), [Exodus 25:10-22](#), [1 Corinthians 11:27-32](#), [Psalm 145](#), [Joshua 31:1-13](#)

CONCLUSION

In this section of 1 Samuel, we witnessed God's judgment of Israel's false religion and Samuel's invitation to Israel to repent and return to God. What does it mean to you that in the stories of 1 Samuel, we don't just see God's glory departing from Israel, but also see that God *wants* to dwell in the midst of his people, and that his glory comes back to Israel? Share your reflections with God in prayer and discuss with him any convictions the Holy Spirit stirred in your heart as you considered the questions above.

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