

**Kingmaker: The Qualities of a Godly Influencer**  
**1 Samuel 11**  
**Unifier**

**Introduction:** Last week, Jonathan Pugh took you through the events in First Samuel chapters nine and ten and the selection of Saul as King. In it, Samuel made it clear they were getting a King not as a blessing from God but because of their complete lack of faith in God. Before Samuel formally announced Saul as the man God chose as Israel's first King, Samuel said,

**18 "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.' 19 But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, 'Set a king over us.' (1 Samuel 10:18-19)**

Comically, later, while they were drawing lots for who would be king, the great and mighty Saul was actually hiding when his name was drawn. Samuel had already told him this was going to happen, so when they started drawing lots, Saul went and hid in some baggage! (1 Samuel 10:22)

So, is it any wonder that while some were super impressed with this young man of stature, others were not? This is not a glorious coronation. They literally drug him out of hiding in baggage, trying to avoid it! How's that for comedy? It was as if God was saying, "Fine, you don't want to trust me, then go drag you're King out from hiding himself in the baggage!"

As you will see later in our study of Samuel, Saul had a real serious issue with his self-worth, and it destroyed him. But what I need you to recall now is that the people were not unified about Saul. After all of their literal begging for a king like other nations, when they finally got their tall, handsome, physically impressive leader, they found him in hiding. Some were still truly pumped about Saul, but as the chapter closes, we see that others were not. Chapter ten closes with a very negative vibe in Israel,

**27 But some worthless fellows said, "How can this man save us?" And they despised him and brought him no present. But he held his peace. (1 Samuel 10:27)**

This perfectly set the stage for what was going to happen next in chapter 11.

**Proposition: 1 Samuel 11 contains 5 eye-opening events that led to a total change in Israel's vibe.**

**The first eye-opening event was an attack on Israel.**

**(1) Nahash, King of the Ammonites, besieged the Israelite city of Jabesh-gilead. - 11:1-2**

- A. **1 Then Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead, and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you." 2 But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "On this condition I will make a treaty with you, that I gouge out all your right eyes, and thus bring disgrace on all Israel."**
- B. "... in 1 Sam 12:12 we are told that it was because of the earlier phases of the Ammonite oppression of Transjordanian Israel that the people's representatives insisted Samuel appoint a king for them."<sup>1</sup>
- C. "The *Ammonite* king *Nahash* ruled a small state in Trans-jordan, on the borders of the Israelite territory known as Gilead. At some earlier date his army had invaded Israelite territory, and they now besieged the city of *Jabesh Gilead*. ... Each Israelite tribe had been used to acting independently, and this narrative reveals that even an individual city like Jabesh Gilead could make its own treaties."<sup>2</sup>
- D. "... the Ammonites have a colorful history in relation to the Israelites. Their ancestor, Ben-ammi, was (like his half-brother Moab) a son of Abraham's nephew, Lot, by incest with one of his daughters (Genesis 19:38). The Ammonites (with the Moabites) were eventually included by the prophets among Israel's traditional enemies (see, for example, Isaiah 11:14; Jeremiah 9:25, 26; 25:21; 27:3; 49:1–6; Ezekiel 25:1–7; Daniel 11:41; Amos 1:13–15; Zephaniah 2:8, 9). The antagonism can be traced back to Israel's encounters with the Ammonites on the journey to the promised land (see Deuteronomy 23:3–6). More recently (from the point of view of 1 Samuel 11) the Ammonites had repeatedly been involved in aggression against the Israelites (see Judges 3:13; 10:7–9, 17, 18)."<sup>3</sup>
- E. "This was the city of **Jabesh Gilead**, about 25 miles south of the Sea of Galilee, east of the Jordan River. Saul's special concern for this community may well lie in possible ancestral ties which he had there. Judges 19–21 records the story of the civil war between Benjamin and the other tribes, which resulted in the annihilation of all but 600 men of Benjamin. With no wives and children it is apparent that the tribe would become extinct. To prevent this the leaders of Israel proposed that the virgin women of any town which had not sent troops to combat Benjamin should be seized and given to these survivors as wives. When it was discovered that Jabesh Gilead had failed in this respect, the 400 virgins of

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<sup>1</sup> Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (1 Sa 11:1). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>2</sup> Payne, D. F. (1994). [1 and 2 Samuel](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., pp. 307–308). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>3</sup> Woodhouse, J. (2008). [1 Samuel: Looking for a leader](#) (pp. 193–196). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

the city were captured and given to the Benjamites. Since Saul was a Benjamite, it is entirely possible that his ancestry sprang in part from Jabesh Gilead.”<sup>4</sup>

- F. “Siege warfare had both advantages and risks. Breaching a strong city wall in the face of fierce protectors (such as archers and stone throwers) on the walls above was no easy task. If the attack did not occur at harvest season and the city had an internal supply of drinking water, those behind the city walls could wait out the surrounding army. In the meantime, the surrounding army’s soldiers had to suffer exposure to cold nights and hot days, fatigue, hunger, and many other discomforts for an indeterminate period of time—all the while worrying about the sudden arrival of the besieged city’s allies. But if the enemy was smart enough to attack during the harvest season, the surrounding army could starve out the inhabitants of the city. The resulting starvation was a terrible way to die. Because both sides were running risks, it was normal for there to be negotiations. Then too the besieging force had to be careful not to go too close to the walls because of the danger of large stones hurled from their tops (see 2 Sam 11:21, 24 and sidebar on siege at 1 Sam 23:7–8).”<sup>5</sup>
- G. **“Make a treaty with us’** The Hebrew phrase used here refers to cutting a covenant. In antiquity, covenant making often was accompanied by a formal ceremony involving a sacrifice. Participants would cut animals into pieces and then pass between them. This signified what would befall the person who violated the terms of the agreement—they would be cut into pieces (see Gen 15:7–21).”<sup>6</sup>
- H. “... Nahash was willing, but on only one condition: “that I gouge out all your right eyes, and thus bring disgrace on all Israel” (11:2). According to Josephus, warriors of that day fought in formation with interlocked shields, so that the left eye was covered by the shield. By gouging out the right eye, Nahash rendered them unfit for battle, though still eligible for slave labor. If Nahash succeeded in reducing Jabesh-gilead and disarming its garrison, Israel could have lost its territory east of the Jordan permanently.”<sup>7</sup>
- I. “... One-eyed persons (Akk. *nuppulu*), lacking depth perception, could not fight effectively, but they could see well enough to serve their captors. Nahash, not trusting the Israelite men to keep the terms of the treaty, wished to make them incapable of ever resisting him militarily. This was the practical side of the measure. But the text adds that Nahash wished to disgrace (חֶרְפָּה, *cherpah*) all Israel, for the people of Jabesh-Gilead were also Israelites. This was like Hitler’s

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<sup>4</sup> Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 442). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>5</sup> Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (1 Sa 11:1). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>6</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (1 Sa 11:1–2). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>7</sup> Phillips, R. D. (2012). [1 Samuel](#). (P. G. Ryken & R. D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., Eds.) (1st ed., pp. 169–172). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

yellow Star of David placed on the garment of every Jew in Nazi Germany, which authorized mistreatment by all who saw their condition.”<sup>8</sup>

### The second eye-opening event was the response of the leaders of Jabesh-gilead.

#### (2) Instead of seeking the help of their new king, the leaders of Jabesh-gilead sent word to every tribal leader in Israel. – 11:3

- A. **3 The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days' respite that we may send messengers through all the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save us, we will give ourselves up to you."**
- B. Nahash seemed willing to gamble that nobody would respond, which would cause Jabesh to give up and surrender without a fight. He could also have been so confident that he could defeat Israel that the idea of the other tribes running to his rescue just meant more reward for his victory.
- C. “When they realized that Nahash was in no mood to negotiate, the elders of Jabesh requested a seven-day reprieve so that they might seek deliverance from other tribes. Nahash was so confident of the political disarray of Israel that he actually granted the request of the elders. Even if other tribes should respond to the plea of Jabesh, Nahash was confident that he would be able to defeat the Israelites (11:3).”<sup>9</sup>
- D. “... Like the men at the end of chapter 10, they did not expect *him* to save them. Saul did not even come to their minds. They proposed to “send messengers through all the territory of Israel” in the vague hope that there might be *someone* to save them. Why they thought Nahash might agree to such a proposal is difficult to guess, but that they would make such a request underlines their wretched plight. Apparently Nahash thought so little of Israel’s strength that he played with them, like a cat with a mouse. He let them have their seven days.<sup>12</sup> After seven days, however, everyone knew that there would be violence. This enemy was real.”<sup>10</sup>

### The third eye-opening event was how Saul responded!

#### (3) Saul threatened to kill the livestock of any Israelite unwilling to go to war with him against Nahash. – 11:4-7

- A. There’s actually a lot more than what I put in that point that I could say about how this response was eye-opening! So, let me just walk you through it.

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<sup>8</sup> Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). *1 & 2 Samuel* (1 Sa 11:2). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, J. E. (1995). *The Books of History* (p. 270). Joplin, MO: College Press.

<sup>10</sup> Woodhouse, J. (2008). *1 Samuel: Looking for a leader* (p. 196). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

- B. 4 When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported the matter in the ears of the people, and all the people wept aloud. 5 Now, behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen. And Saul said, "What is wrong with the people, that they are weeping?" So they told him the news of the men of Jabesh. 6 And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. 7 He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!" Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one man.**
- C. First, the response of the people was to weep aloud! They have begged for a King for such a time as this, literally to lead them into battle, but the first time they need to go fight their response was to completely freak out!
- D. The reason they were likely freaking out was because their King was in a field behind oxen! That's not exactly what they had in mind when they said they wanted a "king like other nations." We can romanticize how awesome it was that as King, he was out plowing the fields, but I assure you, if a King has time to plow fields, he's not doing his job as King! It's no wonder they were weeping. Not only had their King hidden in baggage to avoid being King, but now he's out running the ancient version of a tractor all day instead of organizing and leading the tribes as the King of Israel. Instead of bringing the leaders of the nation together to fix problems and seize opportunities, he was plowing fields!
- E. But nonetheless, when he hears the people freaking out, the Spirit of God fills Saul, and he is apparently angered by their total lack of faith. The text seems to clearly suggest that what came next was led completely by the Spirit of God. Saul sends messengers to every tribe in Israel to tell them he will kill the oxen of every man who doesn't come out to fight with him and Samuel!
- F. It's also eye-opening that he invokes Samuels' name to validate this command. Clearly, Saul doesn't have much confidence in his ability to motivate the nation, and for good reason: At this point, his approval rating is really low!
- G. "The chunks of meat were to be visual aids to reinforce the first royal edict. If any man failed to report for military duty to follow Saul and Samuel, his oxen would be slaughtered (cf. Judg 19:29–30) Mentioning Samuel's name in this call to arms indicates the insecurity which Saul felt in his royal rank at this period (11:4–7)."<sup>11</sup>
- H. Finally, "This method of getting the attention of the tribes is remarkably similar to that of the Levite of Ephraim who dissected his concubine's corpse and sent

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<sup>11</sup> Smith, J. E. (1995). [\*The Books of History\*](#) (p. 270). Joplin, MO: College Press.

the parts to the various tribes, a part of the story from Judges 19–21 (see comments on Jud. 19:27–30)”<sup>12</sup>

- I. “Saul’s gesture recalls the actions of the Levite in Judg 19:29. Upon discovering that his concubine was raped and murdered in Benjaminite Gibeah, the Levite cut his concubine’s dead body into twelve sections and sent these body parts around to the twelve tribes to incite them to punish the Benjaminite perpetrators of this crime. There too the verb **נִתְּחַח** (*nitteach*) describes the dismemberment of the body. Saul’s gesture has also been compared to the so-called ritual of the pieces (**הַגְּזָרִים**, *haggezarim*) used in covenant ceremonies, such as that portrayed in Gen 15. Such rituals symbolized that a violator of the covenant would suffer the fate of the bisected animals. The language of Saul’s threat is enhanced by the pass. verb “shall be done,” which could easily be understood as a “divine passive\*”—meaning that Yahweh himself would kill off the livestock of anyone refusing to fight, thus depriving him of his livelihood.”<sup>13</sup>

#### **The fourth eye-opening event was the decisive defeat of Nahash!**

#### **(4) Saul and the Israelites crushed the Ammonites. - 11:8-11**

- A. **8 When he mustered them at Bezek, the people of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. 9 And they said to the messengers who had come, "Thus shall you say to the men of Jabesh-gilead: 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have deliverance.'" When the messengers came and told the men of Jabesh, they were glad. 10 Therefore the men of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will give ourselves up to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you." 11 And the next day Saul put the people in three companies. And they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. And those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.**
- B. The author's mention of Judah as separate from Israel has at least two implications:
  1. The Book of Samuel is likely written by a person after the Kingdom split following Solomon’s reign.
  2. This event was a testimony for a divided nation to see what it looked like when they were united.

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<sup>12</sup> Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 442). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>13</sup> Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (1 Sa 11:5–7). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- C. “The men of Jabesh immediately sent word to Nahash that they would surrender themselves to him the following day and he could then do with them whatever he had determined to do. This report no doubt lulled Nahash into a false sense of security. He most likely took no ordinary military precautions to prevent a surprise attack (11:9–10). During the night the Israelite forces drew near. Saul organized his troops into three units, probably to facilitate a pinchers movement against the enemy. Sometime during the morning watch (2 a.m. to 6 a.m.) the attack was launched. The battle turned out to be a slaughter of Ammonites. Only a few stragglers survived (11:11).”<sup>14</sup>
- D. “The night crossing of the Jordan is implied. The three companies probably came at the Ammonite camp from three different directions (cf. Judges 7:16–18, 20, 21; 9:43; 1 Samuel 13:17, 18). The details of the bloody battle, beginning just before dawn and lasting until about noon, do not need to be labored. It is clear that many Ammonites fell in battle that day. In striking contrast to the people of Israel who had come out “as one man” (v. 7), the surviving Ammonites were scattered “so that no two of them were left together.”<sup>15</sup>

**The fifth eye-opening event was how Saul used the victory to respond to those who had publicly questioned, and even flatly ignored his Kingship!**

**(5) Saul opted to use the victory not as an opportunity to turn his supporters against those who ignored his Kingship, but rather to give grace and unite the nation around him as King. (11:12-15)**

- A. We live in a country that has long since left this vibe. Between all the inflammatory, divisive garbage in the national news, and all the inflammatory garbage people post on social media, the new vibe in America is that if you don’t agree with everything I believe, then you are a threat to America. If you want to justify seeing even moderate Republicans as existential threats to our nation’s present and future, then just watch a few hours of Fox News or Newsmax tonight. If you want to justify seeing conservative Republicans as evil fascists trying to create a racist white nationalist country, then just turn on any other news broadcast other than Fox News or Newsmax. I will say since Elon Musk took over Twitter (now X), you can read all you want on both these perspectives, whereas prior, you basically only got to justify hating white conservatives; now, you can fairly find justification to hate everybody!
- B. Sadly, Saul will soon get there himself. It doesn’t take long before Saul starts acting like some of the political leaders in America, and just as it is in America, the results are ugly. But this wasn’t one of those moments! It is truly eye-opening what Saul did here! After all the rejection he had been experiencing as King, most

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<sup>14</sup> Smith, J. E. (1995). *The Books of History* (pp. 270–271). Joplin, MO: College Press.

<sup>15</sup> Woodhouse, J. (2008). *1 Samuel: Looking for a leader* (pp. 199–201). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

would take this opportunity to unleash vengeance on those who opposed them. But Saul does the exact opposite!

- C. **12 Then the people said to Samuel, "Who is it that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, that we may put them to death." 13 But Saul said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has worked salvation in Israel."**
- D. Saul points them to the VICTORY God had just accomplished for them and, in doing so, says we can't focus on what God just did for us and be vengeful towards our brothers! If we are truly pumped about what God just did for us, then we need to let the offense of those who refused to acknowledge me as King be water under the bridge. What God just did was so awesome; who cares about what happened yesterday?
- E. To no surprise, Samuel agrees, and here's what happened.
- F. **14 Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingdom." 15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they sacrificed peace offerings before the LORD, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.**
1. "The brilliant and decisive defeat of the Ammonites convinced everyone that Saul indeed was the right choice for king."<sup>16</sup>
  2. "... the reason for a new ceremony is plain to see, in view of the earlier measure of hostility to Saul (10:27). Now for the first time the whole nation gave him allegiance."<sup>17</sup>
  3. "Gilgal was certainly an appropriate place to go after what had happened. It was one of the centers visited annually by Samuel as he "judged" Israel (1 Samuel 7:16). Gilgal's name was meant to be a perpetual reminder that through the exodus and the safe entry of the people of Israel into the land of Canaan God had "rolled away the reproach [or disgrace] of Egypt" (Joshua 5:9). Now the Lord had once again delivered Israel from threatened "disgrace" (1 Samuel 11:2). How fitting then to "go to Gilgal" once again! ... The location is important. In obedience to the word of Samuel all the people went to the place where the exodus from Egypt had reached its goal (see Joshua 4:19–24; 5:9–12). At Gilgal something was done and something was said. What was done is briefly described here. The words, which as usual

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<sup>16</sup> Smith, J. E. (1995). *The Books of History* (p. 271). Joplin, MO: College Press.

<sup>17</sup> Payne, D. F. (1994). [1 and 2 Samuel](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 308). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.



make sense of the actions, are reported in chapter 12. Here we note the simple but very important description of what was done: "... and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal" (1 Samuel 11:15b)."<sup>18</sup>

- G. The people of Israel united around Saul because he led them to victory. As we will see later, Saul's showing of grace was also likely a result of his feeling like he was winning. Later, when he perceived he wasn't winning, grace was nowhere to be found. Why is it important for me to point that out? Well, let me tell you about something that happened here in Dallas, NC.
- H. In 2007, a unique thing happened in Dallas, NC. If you know anything about the history of North Gaston High School Football, then you know just how unique it was. As the Western Conference Champion, we played for the state championship. That season, I was one of the assistant coaches on the offense and the passing game coordinator. It was my job to coach receivers and keep the offensive coordinator up to speed on which pass plays were open against the defenses they were lining up against us. It was an intense awesome day for sure! Our 2007 State Championship game was the highest-scoring game in the neutral site NC High School State championship history. It was an absolute track meet of a football game. Unfortunately, even though we had more yards of offense than the other team, we had more turnovers and fewer points, so it ended in a loss.
- I. But, despite the heartbreak of losing a State Championship, the ride of that season and the one prior to it was still incredible. I have so many great memories from those two seasons, but one of them was the astonishing excitement and unity we experienced in Dallas during that run. Dallas is a great place to live and work, but I'll be honest: this town isn't one with a lot of energy and high expectations, nor is it one that consistently rallies together with a real sense of unity, a real sense of "us." However, during the 2006 and 2007 football seasons, and especially in 2007, Dallas was electric! It was energized, rocking, and unified like never before—big time!
- J. Now, some people get offended that a popular game can have that kind of effect on a town, but it's actually not just the game that does it. If it were just the game, then Dallas, NC, would be unified and energetic like that every football season. However, what got the town motivated wasn't that football is a popular sport, but rather because North Gaston was successful at it in those seasons. We are all attracted to winning. That's why it's hard to find a lot of energetic Carolina Panther or Charlotte Hornets fans these days. Neither has done a lot of winning in a while!
- K. On the other hand, have you ever noticed that towns don't normally come to life and have huge pep rallies that take over multiple blocks because the mathematics team won a state championship, nor does the spelling bee

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<sup>18</sup> Woodhouse, J. (2008). [\*1 Samuel: Looking for a leader\*](#) (pp. 203–209). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

championship, art champion, tennis champion, track champion, and the list goes on? But let a small town like Dallas have a High School basketball team or football team make a run to the state championship, and the entire town will come to life. Everybody will be in it to win it together! People will donate money to help get the team what it needs to travel. People will drive for hours and spend all kinds of money to cheer for the team at the game. When we beat Asheville High School for the Western Conference finals, it felt like it was below zero outside, but the stands were completely packed, and there were even people standing around who couldn't get a seat! Winning in things that matter to people totally unites the people that it matters to!

- L. It's as plain and simple as that. Victory motivates unity, especially when it's victory in things that matter to people. So, what's my point? Well, there's a head-scratcher in all this. If a single military victory could unite a nation around the man they had to drag out of hiding in baggage to be their king, and even more so, if a football team winning games can unite people and get them to look past racial barriers; if it can get democrats and republicans cheering for something together; if it can ignite a passion for living and being a part of a community at the level we saw in Dallas, NC in the fall of 2007, then what does that say about what we truly believe about Jesus and the Good News of what He has done for us (AKA the Gospel!)? Listen to God's Word!
- M. **8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, 10 and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, (2 Timothy 2:8-10)**
- N. **17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. (Revelation 1:17-18)**
- O. **9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)**
- P. At the name of Jesus, everyone will one day be united before Him! Whether they are under his judgement or his blessing, every knee will bow before Him and acknowledge Him for who He is—God! It didn't happen the first time, but it will

happen! I mean, can there be any victory bigger than that? Has there ever been one that creates universal unity in declaration and action?

- Q. Can there be a bigger victory than defeating the curse of sin that separates us from God forever; the curse that condemns us to a life of separation not only from His Heaven but also from love itself? Can there be a bigger victory than the one that rescues us from an eternity of hell where we would live separated from God and one another forever? Can there be a bigger victory than the one that guarantees we can be with our loved ones for all eternity?
- R. Can there be a bigger victory to unite us? Can there be a bigger victory that could better overcome all the things that divide our marriages, families, churches, and communities?
- S. Listen, the answer is a big, fat, huge, resounding NO! There is literally nothing that compares. No team or champion has even remotely accomplished what Jesus accomplished. Furthermore, there has never been a champion whose victory gave us what He gave us! Not even close! So, it's ridiculous that it doesn't!!! Seriously, it begs the question of how we can justify negativity, divisiveness, and bitterness in our lives with Christ's victory being so clearly enormous and so clearly for us.

**CHALLENGE – Given the immense victory Christ accomplished for us, how are you making room for negativity, bitterness, and divisiveness in your life?**

Now listen, just because you are blown away by the victory we have in Jesus, doesn't mean you will experience unity with everybody. Unity requires two people who are actually committed to it. Jesus loved the people of Jerusalem, but they shouted for His execution!

I know people in this world who, whether they realize it or not, are committed to division. Until that divisive spirit changes in them, there's no way to live in unity with them. However, that doesn't change the fact that when the victory of what we have in Christ truly dominates our life and thinking, it drowns out all the reasons we have for not loving and longing to live in unity with others, including those who don't want to have it with us.

When Jesus said to love your enemies, he didn't promise they would love you back and that you would end up being friends! You can't be friends with those who are trying to destroy you. The two are not compatible. But I can love somebody that refuses to love me. I can love an enemy I will not surrender to and even one I must defeat. God loves the sinful world he will judge, so much so that He sent His one and only Son to die for it! Those who make me an enemy may never give me the opportunity to demonstrate His love to them, but I can still forgive and love them from a heart that is overflowing with God's love for me.

And this is what I'm getting at. When I'm filled up with the joy of the victory I have in Christ, I can't hear the reasons for me not to love my enemies! We may not ever be able to be friends, but if I'm being driven and filled up by what Christ has done in my life, then I won't

have room for anything that doesn't coincide with it! Negativity, bitterness, and divisiveness are gone when we are celebrating victory, so how in the world can we claim to be focused on the victory we have in Christ and have that stuff in our lives?

Do you want unity in your marriage and relationships? Stop focusing on what offends you, what's bothering you, and all that you believe has been done wrong against you, and start focusing on God's love for you! Watch how your entire attitude and actions change towards your spouse when you are being driven by His victories and not their perceived failures! I'm not promising they will change, but you will!

So, are you walking around with constant negativity in your life? Then stop filling up your mind and heart with negativity and start filling it up with the water that quenches every thirst! Some may say, "I love Jesus, but I'm still so negative about life and others?" Well, I can't say if you love Jesus or not, but I can absolutely say if your life is filled with negativity, bitterness, and divisiveness, you don't really understand or believe how He loves you!

Divisiveness, bitterness, and negativity require a lot of effort from us to keep them alive, so when my effort switches to being filled up with the love of Jesus, then I just don't have much left to give to other things!

In a letter filled with teachings and challenges on how the victory of Christ unifies us, Paul prayed this,

**14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints (unity!) what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:14-21)**

So, here's what we are going to do. Confession is good for the soul. If you are struggling with negativity, bitterness, or divisiveness, then confess it to God and others for sure, but let's spend the next few minutes making the effort that helps us drive it out of our minds. The band is going to come out and lead us in a song of celebration. For some of you, this song will come straight from the heart, but for others, you may need to sing it into your heart! Faith precedes feelings, so sometimes we declare to ourselves and everybody else what it is we are going to believe; we have to declare to ourselves and everybody around us how we are going to view God, life, ourselves, and everybody around us so we can finally start! Sometimes, we just have to speak it, sing it, and do it, even when we don't feel it. That's called faith! That's called obedience. That's called trust! If we know who He is and what He's done, then we have no reason to let our feelings lead us otherwise! So, let's sing

about His victory and let's sing about what it means for us, to ourselves, everybody in this place, and online! Just let it out and declare it because I promise you it is so; we need to start believing and acting like it because it is so!