

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Samuel chapter 2. 1 Samuel 2. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to 1 Samuel 2.

INTRODUCTION: CONTROL FREAK

Is there anybody here who's kinda like me...just kinda a control freak?

- Control freaks don't even like to admit that,
- because they're so in control.
- *"I'm not gonna admit that!"*
- *"I'm in control!"*

But I like to be in control. And as I look back over the last year, one of most difficult things was...

- just how many things
- were brought to my attention
- that I have absolutely no control over.

I mean, how many changes took place in one year?

- Like, if you could talk to yourself one-year-ago,
- you'd be shocked with how completely different your life looks
- from how it looked one year ago.
- But you had no idea that those changes were coming.

Whenever something happens that is out of our control, we change. We all changed in the last year.

But the question is: did you change for the worse, or for the better?

You see, **SLIDE**

- **EVERYONE CHANGES,**
- **BUT NOT EVERYONE MATURES.**

Right? I mean, we all changed last year...but did you mature?

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ILLUSTRATION: CHOOSE

I mean, there are so many things that you can't control...but if you are going to mature, it's time that you start focusing on what you can control.

- You can't choose what you look like...
 - but you can choose to take care of your body.
- You can't choose your family of origin...
 - but you can choose to shape your future family.
- You can't choose where you're born...
 - but you can choose where you live.
- You can't choose your personality...
 - but you can choose your character.
- You can't choose how you feel...
 - but you can choose what you do.
- You can't choose what happens to you...
 - but you can choose how you respond.

None of us gets to choose the challenges that await us in the future...
but there's a lot of things we can choose.

So, I'm calling this sermon: **SLIDE CHOOSE YOUR CHANGE.**

You can CHOOSE YOUR CHANGE.

Today in 1 Samuel 2,

- I think we're going to be challenged to not only change...
- but to change for the good...
- to mature.

And we're going to see a juxtaposition today between two priests,
and the young boy, Samuel.

So, let's get after it! 1 Samuel 2. Let's start in verse 12:

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1 SAMUEL 2:12-17

[12] Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD. [13] The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, [14] and he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. All that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. [15] Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give meat for the priest to roast, for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw." [16] And if the man said to him, "Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish," he would say, "No, you must give it now,

and if not, I will take it by force.” [17] Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD, for the men treated the offering of the LORD with contempt.

POINT 1: BELIEVE

Now, there’s a lot going on in those verses, and I’m going to break it all down for you.

But let me give you the first way you CHOOSE YOUR CHANGE from this passage. The way is to **SLIDE BELIEVE**. You cannot mature if you don’t believe.

Now, we see in verse 12

- that the sons of Eli, their names are Phinehas & Hophni,
- these were priests!
- And yet, they did not know the Lord.

You can write this down: THAT’S NOT GOOD!

You see, what you believe matters!

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That word, they did not **know**. **Know**, in the Hebrew is the same word that we find in Genesis 4 where it says, “**Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore a son.**”

So, it’s not simply knowing as in information...

- but it’s intimacy,
- and relationship,
- and acknowledgement,
- and belief in!

The sons of Eli are priests,

- so, they most certainly know all about God and the Scriptures.
- They know all about him...
- and yet **they did not know the Lord.**
- They did not BELIEVE in him.

APPLICATION: WHAT/HOW

How many of you know: that WHAT you believe about God is of the utmost importance?

A.W. Tozer famously said, *“What I believe about God is the most important thing about me.”*

- WHAT you believe about God is unbelievably important.
- But I want to post that: just as important, is HOW you believe.

This is what the rest of these verses are about.

EXPLAIN: THEIR *HOW* IS WRONG

In verses 13-14 we find that

- Phinehas and Hophni would send one of their servants
- while people are making sacrifices to the Lord,
- with a three-pronged-fork
- to take some meat for them.

This move was an unlawful way to get food for the priests. Ok?

Yes, part of the sacrifice was to be given to the priest to be eaten. But Leviticus 7:28-36 prescribes that the Priests are allotted the breast and the right leg.

- This three-pronged-fork move was unlawful.
- HOW they were believing or practicing or worshiping God
- was the problem here!
- They knew WHAT God said about the sacrifice.
- But their HOW didn't match.

Moreover, in verses 15-16,

- before the fat is burned in honor of God
 - as prescribed in Leviticus 3,
- the priests' servants are demanding raw cuts.
- Why? Because fatty meat tastes better!
 - Can I get a bacon witness?

Again, this is not HOW God prescribes Priests are to get what they need to live off of.

- And the worshipper even reminds the priests' man
- that proper reverence should be shown to God first,
- only to be threatened with physical force.

APPLICATION: WHAT/HOW

Hear me: WHAT you believe matters greatly. But HOW you believe matters just as much.

So many people will say that they believe in God.

- That they are Christians.
- That they believe in Jesus.

The WHAT of their belief may be correct.

But then the HOW of their belief does not match up with HOW God says we should believe.

- They're not in the Scriptures.
- Not praying.
- Not in any meaningful relationship with a church.
- Not giving.
- Not serving.
- They don't live out their faith at work or school or with friends!
- There is no objective evidence that they believe!

And this is why BELIEF is a part of how you CHOOSE YOUR CHANGE.

- Because WHAT you believe
- and HOW you believe
- will affect your maturity.

ILLUSTRATION: 10-YEAR-CHALLENGE

You remember a while back when everyone was doing the 10-year-challenge on social media?

- The challenge was to take a picture of yourself
- and post it next to a picture of yourself from 10-years-ago.
 - If you're a church planter,
 - I'd highly advise against looking at those pictures,
 - alright?
 - Let me just say that 10-years ago,
 - I did not have nearly this much gray hair, alright!
 - Y'all are aging me significantly!

APPLICATION

But the real 10-year-challenge isn't what you looked like 10-years ago.

- The real 10-year-challenge
- is what's your life going to look like
- 10-years from now.

You see, 10-years from now,

- your relationship with God is going to be somewhere,
- but you can CHOOSE YOUR CHANGE.
- You see, **change is inevitable...**
- **but maturity happens on purpose.**
 - WHAT you believe
 - and HOW you believe
 - will factor into
 - IF you mature.

Because WHAT and HOW you BELIEVE puts you on a direction.

And direction...

- not feelings,
- not determination,
- not intentions,
- not motivation...

But **SLIDE DIRECTION DETERMINES DESTINATION.**

You are changing IN a direction, and that direction leads somewhere.

And HOW you BELIEVE will determine what direction you're going.

ILLUSTRATION: YOUTH GIRL

I remember in the first youth group I was leading, there was this girl in our youth group who got pregnant. Super hard stuff.

- And she showed up in my office at her parent's request...

And as she sat down in my office, she said,

- *"I don't know how this happened."*
- And I go, *"I do!"*

This is why they don't want me to do counseling anymore, ok?

- But this is the direction principle!
- DIRECTION DETERMINES DESTINATION.

And I feel bad for how I responded to that girl, ok?

- Because I've gotten there myself in life...
- wondering, *"God, how did I get here?"*
- *How did this happen?"*

TRANSITION

- It's when HOW you believe
- doesn't match up with WHAT you believe...
 - and that DIRECTION
 - always DETERMINES
 - your DESTINATION.

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The first way you CHOOSE YOUR CHANGE is to BELIEVE.

But there's another in this passage.

Look at verses 22-25:

1 SAMUEL 2:22-25

[22] Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. [23] And he said to them, “Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. [24] No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. [25] If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?” But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death.

POINT 2: BEHAVE

Now, it's not only that the sons of Eli are sinning in belief...but it goes further. And it's my second way you CHOOSE YOUR CHANGE.

You BELIEVE and then you **SLIDE BEHAVE**. And this is linked to the BELIEVE thing, **because your BELIEF influences your BEHAVIOR**.

Now, I know there's a swing that's taken place

- in modern Christian churches
- in response to Legalism and self-righteousness
- that so many of us have experienced in the church.

And so, the pendulum has reactionarily swung away from a sense of rules and obedience and legalism...but it has swung too far to licentiousness.

- *“I can just do whatever I want*
- *because I'm free in Christ.”*

But listen to me:

- you want to CHOOSE YOUR CHANGE?
- You want to mature as a disciple?
- You've gotta grow in your obedience.
- You've gotta BEHAVE.

Jesus tells us as much in Matthew 28:19-20, the Great Commission:

SLIDE MATTHEW 28:19–20

[19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe [or obey] all that I have commanded you.

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EXPLAIN: PRIESTS BEHAVIOR

Your behavior matters!

- So, Hophni and Phinehas's moral offence was even greater
- than their worship offense.

They were having sexual relations with the women who tended the worship center.

- They had turned the tabernacle into a brothel,
- a place where sin was committed...
- rather than confessed.

And Eli rebukes them and warns them. But in verse 25 it says that they would not listen, for it was the will of the Lord to put them to death.

So, that's a tough one, right?

Now, we could too hastily read this verse to say

- Hophni and Phinehas did not listen to Eli
- and, consequently, God decided to put them to death.

But that's not what the text says.

- It says that Eli's sons did not listen to him
- BECAUSE God had decided to put them to death.

Their resistance was not the rationale for God's judgment...
but the result of his judgment.

Now, this is tough theology: BUT,

- in light of all the previous verses about them,
- we can say that BECAUSE of their persisting rebellion...
- God decided to put them to death...
- and that's why they had not listened to Eli's plea.

ILLUSTRATION: RICH MAN & LAZARUS

Now, stick with me: it reminds me of Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus,

- and when the rich man is requesting God
- to send Lazarus back to warn his brothers
- of their impending doom...
 - kinda like the Ghost of Christmas Past from Dickens...

But God's response is:

SLIDE LUKE 16:31

“If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”

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APPLICATION: KILL SIN

What we're seeing here is that

- someone can remain so firm in their rebellion
- that God will confirm them in it,
- so much so that they will remain utterly deaf to
- and unmoved by
- any warnings of judgment
- or pleas for repentance.

Belief AND behavior are of the utmost importance if you are to mature.

- They would not listen,
- for it was the will of the Lord to put them to death.

John Owen says this, *“Be killing sin or it will be killing you.”*

ILLUSTRATION: BEHAVIOR DIRECTION

And just like belief sets you on a direction. So does your behavior.

How you behave is a DIRECTION that DETERMINES you DESTINATION!

This is true for every one of us:

You're on a financial direction...and it has a destination.

- And If I ask you, *"In 10 years, where do you want to be financially?"*
- I don't know anyone in here who would reply, *"In 10-years I want to be broke! Just up to my neck in debt."*
- But some of you are going that direction.

Relationally, you're going a direction.

- When I talk to college guys and ask, *"In 10-years where do you want to be relationally?"* They respond with a description of love that's akin to a romance movie. Just storybook.
- But when asked, *"ok, what are you doing to get there?"* They're like, *"Hey man, right now I'm just playing the field! I'm young...give me some time!"*
 - It's like they think it's just gonna magically happen.
 - Like, just one day they're gonna put a rental tux on,
 - and show up at church,
 - and a father is gonna hand his little girl of too him
 - to become husband-of-the-year.
- Listen, scooter...that ain't how it works.
 - You're going a direction,
 - and it's taking you somewhere...
 - but it ain't there.

Ladies, I'm seeing this more and more,

- but there's this fitness-mid-life-crisis thing going on,
- where you're trying desperately trying to find your identity in how you look.
- And listen, you look great...you do...you look great!
- But hear me: this is as good as it gets!
 - It ain't getting better.
 - And you can tweak it,
 - and hustle,
 - and work out,
 - and crunch it,
 - and try to meet your reunion goal, or whatever.
 - But I'm just telling you,
 - time and gravity are not your friend.
- Now, if you've got enough coin,
- you might be able to nip and tuck it for a while...
- but then in the end you're like,
 - "Oh...wow...ok...woah!
 - That's really something there.
 - Like Mr. Potato head, or something."
- I'm telling you, that direction leads somewhere.
 - You better get on a course
 - where your value is in who God says you are,
 - not what you look like.

If you're married, you're going in a direction, too.

- You don't just accidentally frolic your way over
- to deep, abiding, self-sacrificing love for one another.
- That's a direction.

If you're flirting with someone at work...that's a direction.

- I know so many people who are heartbroken
- over the divorce they went through,
- and it started as innocently as,
 - *"Well, it's just a lunch.*
 - *He's my work friend.*
 - *She gets me."*
- It's a direction.

You don't think pornography's a direction?

- It's a direction.
- It'll kill your intimacy.
- It'll numb your soul.
- I've seen it!

APPLICATION

I wonder for many of us here today,

- if the reason why you've stopped growing...
- the reason why you've stopped maturing...
- the reason why you continue to wander...

is because you continue to give in to temptation.

- You continue to disobey God's word.
- You continue to behave poorly.
- And your destination is being affected
- by the direction you're choosing.

Every single one of us is headed in a direction.

- Hophni and Phinehas were.
- And if we're not careful,
- that direction will have a destination we don't like.

Paul says as much in Romans 1, which was read over us today, when he says:

SLIDE ROMANS 1:21 & 24

[21] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

[24] Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.

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TRANSITION

There is a direction that can lead to God **giving you up** to your sin.
Your behavior matters!

Now, you may have noticed we skipped three sections in our passage today, and I want to go back and juxtapose what the text says about Samuel in comparison to what is said about Eli's sons.

So, verse 11:

1 SAMUEL 2:11

[11] Then Elkanah went home to Ramah. And the boy was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli the priest.

Down to verse 18-21

1 SAMUEL 2:18-21

[18] Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy clothed with a linen ephod. [19] And his mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. [20] Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the LORD give you children by this woman for the petition she asked of the LORD." So then they would return to their home.

[21] Indeed the LORD visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the LORD.

And finally, down to verse 26:

1 SAMUEL 2:26

[26] Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and also with man.

POINT 3: BECOME

You see, there's a pattern here.

- Verse 11 Samuel is ministering to the Lord.
 - And then Phinehas and Hophni are sinning in their belief.
- In verses 18-21 Samuel is ministering before the Lord and growing in the presence of the Lord.
 - And then Phinehas and Hophni are sinning in their behavior, ultimately God giving them over to their destruction.
- And then, in verse 26 Samuel is continuing to grow in stature and favor with the Lord.

This is the last part of how you CHOOSE YOUR CHANGE.

- You BELIEVE.
- You BEHAVE.
- And you **SLIDE BECOME**.

The priests are a train wreck.

- But all the while, there are silent witnesses of God's provision.
- These are hints of hope for God's people.
- God is already at work providing new, godly leadership for his people.

But it's all very quiet. **Growth seldom makes noise.** But God is growing his new leader.

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CONCLUSION

Now church, if you're saying, *"I don't even know if I can mature..."* Listen, you don't have to focus on what you can't control. Shift your perspective to what you can control.

- Today you can control how you BELIEVE....
- you can control how you BEHAVE...
- and that will lead you to BECOME who God wants you to be.

How you BELIEVE will lead to how you BEHAVE.

- And if you will confront your problems and sin and say,
 - *"I'm turning away from this stuff,*
 - *and I'm turning towards back to God."*
- That's how you BECOME.
- That's how you mature.
- That's how you CHOOSE YOUR CHANGE.

And that's what I bring to you today.

- It's a great invitation.
- For this year not to look like last year.
- You can mature.
- Jesus, he came to mature you.

Some of you need to change WHAT and HOW you BELIEVE.

- Because I believe that like Samuel,
 - he wants you to grow...
 - he wants you to change...
 - he wants you to mature.

Some of you need to change some BEHAVIOR. Let's go! Let's put some sin to death today!

- And I believe that God has good things in store for you.
- I believe that he has good plans for you.
- That God loves you,
- and wants to bring you on the journey of maturity.

But you've gotta CHOOSE YOUR CHANGE

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

Hey, right where you are, if you've never met Jesus, he wants to meet you.

- If you've never BELIEVED,
- the invitation is for you to believe.
- To put your faith and trust in him.
- He loves you.
- He has good plans for you.

And a relationship with him begins with you believing in your heart and confessing with your mouth that he is Lord.

- You confess, *"Jesus, I give you my life.*
- *I want to follow you.*
- *I believe in you."*

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES USED:

- Chester, Tim. You Can Change.
- Davis, Dale Ralph. 1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart.
- Tsumura, David Toshio. The First Book of Samuel.