

SLIDE THAILAND Next Sunday: Thailand Report

SLIDE INTRODUCE

Well, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to 1 Samuel chapter 23.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to 1 Samuel 23,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
 - under every single chair.
 - You'll find 1 Samuel 23 on page **245**.

INTRODUCTION: GATO

I know I told this story a few years back...

- but, when I was a youth pastor,
- we took kids to Juarez, Mexico...
- on missions trips to build homes.

And in Juarez there are stray animals everywhere.

- But on one trip in particular...
- one of our Middle School girls
- took a liking to some stray street cats.
 - And she would bring them food.
 - And cuddle with them.
- And I just kept my distance, because...
 - listen, they were Mexican street cats!

So, one of these cats really took a liking to her...

- hear me...because she was giving it food!

So, we got on the bus to head back to America,

- and this girl tried to sneak this Mexican cat
- in her bag to bring back into the States.
 - And I think they frown upon that
 - at the El Paso border check!

And we didn't know, until we heard it meowing in her duffle!

And so I was the bad guy!

- And I said, "Get that thing off the bus!"
 - No, it doesn't love you...
 - it loves to eat!
 - It'd love me if I fed it...
 - And I obviously hate it!"

And I'll never forget...

- the tears on her face
- as I crushed her little spirit...

And she told me

- that God was calling her
- to save all the homeless Mexican cats.

And I told her that God was NOT calling her to that.

And we ditched that gato.

TRANSITION

Today's sermon is called: **SLIDE HOW DO YOU KNOW?**

- HOW DO YOU KNOW what God is calling you to?
- HOW DO YOU KNOW what God's specific will is for you?

- HOW DO YOU KNOW what school to go to?
- HOW DO YOU KNOW who to marry?
- HOW DO YOU KNOW which job to take?
- HOW DO YOU KNOW how many kids to have?
- HOW DO YOU KNOW where you should live?
- HOW DO YOU KNOW?

The word we use is discernment. How do you discern God's will?

This is what we're going to see in 1 Samuel 23.

RECAP

So, real quick recap and then we gotta get to work:

- David is destined to be the next king of Israel.
 - He killed Goliath.
 - He's been victorious in all his military efforts.
 - He befriended the current king's son.
 - He married the current king's daughter.
 - He now has over 400 men following him,
 - including a priest of the Lord.
 - He is loved in all of Israel.
- But the current king, King Saul, doesn't want this.
 - He's desperate to hold on to power.
 - He's desperate to keep his kingship.
 - And he's desperately trying to find David and kill him.

So, David is on the run from Saul, and Saul is on the hunt for David.

1 Samuel 23 starting in verse 1.

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1 SAMUEL 23:1-2

[1] Now they told David, “Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors.” [2] Therefore David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?” And the LORD said to David, “Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah.”

EXPLAIN: KEILAH

So, David hears

- that the Philistines,
 - Israel’s enemies,
- were fighting against the city of Keilah in Judah.

So, who’s job is it to protect Keilah?

- Yeah, the King of Israel...
- King Saul should be the one attacking the Philistines.
- But Saul is too preoccupied with
- his conspiracy theory concerning David,
 - and thus, he’s spending all his resources
 - hunting down David.

So, David inquired of God, “*Should I go take care of this?*”

And God said, “*Go!*”

Verse 3:

1 SAMUEL 23:3

[3] But David’s men said to him, “Behold, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?”

EXPLAIN: PUSH BACK

Now, David's men push back a little bit.

- They're already being hunted by King Saul.
- They're in hiding.
- And if they go up against the Philistines,
 - not only will they be facing another enemy,
- but they'll also be exposed, in the open, to Saul.

They could end up fighting enemies on both fronts.

So, this is a reasonable pushback!

Verse 4:

1 SAMUEL 23:4-5

[4] Then David inquired of the LORD again. And the LORD answered him, "Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand." [5] And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck them with a great blow. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

EXPLAIN: INQUIRED

So, David heeds the advice of his men...

- But he returned to God,
- and he inquired once more.
- And God again said, "Go."

So, that settles it.

- They go to Keilah,
- and they dominate the Philistines.

Verse 6:

1 SAMUEL 23:6

[6] When Abiathar the son of Ahimelech had fled to David to Keilah, he had come down with an ephod in his hand.

EXPLAIN: EPHOD

Ok, so now we know HOW David had been inquiring of the Lord.

- Abiathar, the last remaining priest,
 - and the most recent addition to David's entourage,
- brought the ephod with him.

Now this is far more than a mere throw away verse!

This is actually the hinge of this section.

- Keilah was saved,
 - through God's guidance,
 - which was discerned
 - by the means of Abiathar's ephod.

You see, in the ephod that the high priest wore, there was a pocket.

- And in that pocket there were two stones.
- They are called the Urim and the Thummim.

And these were used...

- as a means for the priest to discern God's will...
- in a binary way.

You would ask God a yes-or-no type of question.

- And one stone meant yes
- while the other meant no.

But this is how David is inquiring the Lord.

- Should I fight the Philistines?
- Yes or no?

POINT 1

And it's here I'll make my first point. HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Well first, you **SLIDE LOOK TO GOD**

- David LOOKS TO GOD.
- He inquired of God.
- Using the ephod, he seeks God's will for his situation.

And that sounds kinda crazy to us. Right?

It's almost like flipping a coin!

- Should I marry this girl?
 - Heads I will,
 - tails I won't.

Like that seems awfully superstitious.

But we must note:

- this is how God instructed Israel to discern his will for them.
- It worked because it's how God told them to do it.

APPLICATION

Now, that's not how God told US to do it, ok?

- Don't come to me asking a question,
- hoping I've got some magic dice I can throw for you,
 - and it's like, "if I roll a snake eyes, it's a yes!"

No, that's not how it works. Why?

- Cause you're not the king of Israel...
- and I'm no high priest.

But in principle there is no difference...

- between this situation with David,
- and our process of discerning God's will.

God's guidance was given through the priest.

And we enjoy that privilege, too. Hebrews 4 says this:

SLIDE HEBREWS 4:14–16

[14] Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. [15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

APPLICATION

Did you see that?!?

- We LOOK TO GOD the exact same way!
- We go to our great high priest.
 - We draw near. How?
- We draw near through the Scriptures.
- And we draw near in prayer.

What does the Bible say about whatever you're seeking God's will on?

AND...have you spent adequate time praying about it?

TRANSITION

So, David LOOKS TO GOD.

Now, look at what Saul does. Verse 7:

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1 SAMUEL 23:7-8

[7] Now it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah. And Saul said, "God has given him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars." [8] And Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

EXPLAIN

Saul is nowhere close to the heart of God...to the will of God.
He's trying to kill God's anointed king!

- And yet, when he realizes
 - that David routing the Philistines
 - has left him vulnerable,
 - which is exactly what David's men
 - were worried about.
- When he hears this he says,
- "God has given him into my hand!"

And I hear this all the time!

- Without looking to God,
- we attribute things to him...
- it's wishful thinking cloaked in spiritual language.

You wouldn't believe the buffet of crazy I've heard in my years pastoring!

ILLUSTRATION: MARRY HER

"Bro, I know I'm supposed to marry that girl!"

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

- *“Well, God showed me!*
- *You see, she’s in my small group,*
- *and as I left to drive home last night,*
 - *it was all green lights,*
 - *and she has green eyes.*
 - *And that one red one I got stopped at,*
 - *well, she has red hair.*
- *And as I stopped I was thinking about her red hair,*
 - *I looked to my right,*
 - *and there was a billboard for Pantene shampoo...*
 - *And I smelled her once...*
 - *and I think she uses Pantene!*
- *What else do I need?*
- *I know God’s calling me to marry her.”*

“Hey man,

- *that sounds more like a prelude to a restraining order...*
- *than God’s calling...”*

TRANSITION

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

- David LOOKS TO GOD.
- Saul is grasping at straws.

Verses 9-14:

1 SAMUEL 23:9-14

[9] David knew that Saul was plotting harm against him. And he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod here.” [10] Then David said, “O LORD,

the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account. [11] Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD, the God of Israel, please tell your servant.” And the LORD said, “He will come down.” [12] Then David said, “Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?” And the LORD said, “They will surrender you.” [13] Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition. [14] And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand.

TRANSITION

Saul is obsessed.

- He should be out protecting Israel from the enemies...
- Instead, he is seeking David every single day.
- **But God did not give him into his hand.**

So, now in verses 15-18 an old friend comes to visit David.

Look at this:

1 SAMUEL 23:15-18

[15] David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. [16] And Jonathan, Saul’s son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. [17] And he said to him, “Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also

knows this.” [18] And the two of them made a covenant before the LORD.
David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.

POINT 2

Jonathan, David’s best friend, shows up to strengthen David in God.

And let’s make our second point here. HOW DO YOU KNOW?

- Well, first you LOOK TO GOD.
- But second, you **SLIDE LOOK TO OTHERS**

Saul is seeking David’s life every day...which must be exhausting!

And it’s even more exhausting to make decisions under that duress.

In fact,

- I almost always counsel people
- NOT to make major decisions
- when under stress and pressure.

But if you must, one place you can look to help you is wise counsel.

You LOOK TO OTHERS.

And I’ll give two criteria for those people.

- They must be FOR YOU...
- and they must be FOR GOD.

Alright? Don’t just ask your crew!

- It’s easy to find people...
 - who affirm you...
 - no matter what stupid decision you are making!
- Sorry, but that’s your crew!

What I'm talking about is what's known as spiritual authority.

- LOOK TO OTHERS...
- who are FOR YOU...
- and FOR GOD.

Listen to me: one of the clearest ways God will speak to you is through submitting to the wise counsel of a spiritual authority.

ILLUSTRATION: DD

Now what do I mean by submission to wise spiritual authority?

Here's what I mean:

Imagine you are drunk.

At that point you need a designated driver to get you home.

- And listen, there's no arguing with your DD:
 - *"I'm fine...I got this."*
 - *"No you don't got this!"*
- There's no suggestions:
 - *"Why don't you take Broadway?"*
 - *"Listen, you don't get a vote!"*
- You give them the keys...
- and you trust them to get you home.

APPLICATION

So, when I was preparing to plant this church,

- there were a few select men
- who I placed myself under.

I sought wise counsel from these men.

- Was I hearing God correctly that I should plant this church?

And I submitted under their counsel.

- I told one of them, who is a member of this church...
- I told him, *"If you tell me not to, I won't do it!"*

This is why you need to be in a Discipleship Group, or Bible Study.

This is why you need to be a member of a church.

This is why you need to be submitted under Godly leadership.

- You need mature men and women of God surrounding you...
- and you need to submit to them.

You need wise people...

- to encourage you...
- and build you up...
 - but who will also correct,
 - and confront,
 - and even at times, rebuke you.

Your crew will tell you what you WANT to hear.

Wise counsel will tell you what you NEED to hear.

TRANSITION

Sure, Jonathan is encouraging to David!

- They're bros!

But his best encouragement isn't just by being FOR HIM, but by reminding him of the promises of God.

- He is FOR GOD.
- He strengthened his hand in God!

But look what Saul does. Verse 19:

1 SAMUEL 23:19-20

[19] Then the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, “Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of Jeshimon? [20] Now come down, O king, according to all your heart’s desire to come down, and our part shall be to surrender him into the king’s hand.”

EXPLAIN

- So, while David has the wise counsel of Jonathan,
 - one who is both FOR HIM and FOR GOD...
- Saul gets his counsel from the Ziphites.

Most commentators think that the Ziphites are opportunity seeking.

- In fact, the Ziphites are who David wrote Psalm 54 about,
- which I had read over us this morning.

Here’s the verse again:

SLIDE PSALM 54:3

[3] For strangers have risen against me;
ruthless men seek my life;
they do not set God before themselves.

- The Ziphites aren’t FOR GOD.
- They’re not even FOR SAUL.
- They’re FOR THEMSELVES!

And once again, Saul’s response is so crazy! Verses 21-24:

BLANK SLIDE

1 SAMUEL 23:21-24a

[21] And Saul said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, for you have had compassion on me. [22] Go, make yet more sure. Know and see the place where his foot is, and who has seen him there, for it is told me that he is very cunning. [23] See therefore and take note of all the lurking places where he hides, and come back to me with sure information. Then I will go with you. And if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah." [24] And they arose and went to Ziph ahead of Saul.

TRANSITION

He's so deluded that he thinks God is in the midst of this!

You wanna know how we can be sure the Lord isn't in this?

Because...

- The PURPOSES of God cannot be achieved...
- by breaking the PRECEPTS of God.

Saul has a record of rejecting every command of God upon his life...

and now we hear him say, "*God is surely in this!*"

No! That's not how it works!

- So, we LOOK TO GOD...
- we LOOK TO OTHERS...

One more. Verse 24b:

1 SAMUEL 23:24b-26

Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon. [25] And Saul and his men went to seek him. And David was told, so he went down to the rock and lived in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in

the wilderness of Maon. [26] Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. And David was hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them,

EXPLAIN

So, the Ziphites give the exact location of David to Saul...

And if you're reading this, it's a real nail-biter! Right?

- David is in the wilderness,
 - and Saul found him.
- Then David goes to the rock,
 - and Saul found him.
- So David goes back to the wilderness...to a mountain.
 - And Saul is on one side of the mountain.
 - And David is on the other side of the mountain.
- And just as David is hurrying to get away...
- And just as Saul and his men are closing in on David...

Verse 27:

1 SAMUEL 23:27-29

[27] a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid against the land." [28] So Saul returned from pursuing after David and went against the Philistines. Therefore that place was called the Rock of Escape. [29] And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of Engedi.

POINT 3

- At the exact moment...
- at the 11th hour...
- just in the nick of time...
- God delivers David.

The very Philistines who David defeated,

- are the means by which God provides deliverance,
- and gets him out of this bind.

But, is it pure coincidence?

Well, it makes for a tidy third point. HOW DO YOU KNOW God's will?

- You LOOK TO GOD
- You LOOK TO OTHERS
- And you **SLIDE LOOK FOR SIGNS**
 - You LOOK FOR SIGNS from God
 - You look for evidence from God
 - You look for confirmations from God
 - We sometimes call these "open doors" ...
 - *"Man, God opened that door for me."*
 - *The Philistines show up just in the nick of time!*
 - Those are signs.

ILLUSTRATION: THIS BUILDING

I'll give you an example from our church, from Fathom.

When we planted Fathom in 2015 we met in a Young Life facility.

- It had no air conditioning,
- and during summer
- it smelled like the inside of a hockey pad.

Well, we out-grew that space...

- and on one Sunday, right before preaching...
- I came before the church and said,
 - *“Well y’all, we need a new building.*
 - *There’s no more room here.*
 - *The kids are meeting in the supply closet!*
 - *Would you start praying for God to lead us somewhere?”*
- And then I preached God’s word.

Well, two days later...it was Tuesday,

- and I was sitting at a coffee shop in Downtown Littleton.

And I saw another pastor from the area I knew.

- He asked how the church plant was going.
 - And I said, *“Man, it’s going really well.*
 - *Only thing is...we’re running out of space...*
 - *and need to find a new location.”*
- And he said,
 - *“That’s funny...my church is moving locations*
 - *at the end of the month...*
 - *and just this morning the new building owner*
 - *at our current spot*
 - *asked me if I knew of any other churches*
 - *who might be interested.*

- *The building's called The Main Street Center.*
- *Do you want me to connect you with him?"*
- *"Um...yeah!"*

And that afternoon I toured this space...

and about a month later we held our first service here.

Two days later and this place just fell into our laps?

That's a sign!

- Now that's different from the Pantene billboard guy...
 - Cause we were also praying,
 - and we did our due diligence in seeking wise counsel
 - about if that move was the best one for us...
 - but the sign was a PART of the discernment.

CONCLUSION

And this is why we've set aside 2023 as A Year of Prayer.

It's to discern God's will for Fathom's Future.

- We want to LOOK TO GOD,
- LOOK TO OTHERS,
- and LOOK FOR SIGNS
- to discern what God wants from us.

APPLICATION **BLANK SLIDE W/PADS**

So, I wonder if you're trying to figure out God's direction in some area:

- maybe it's a job...
- maybe it's a relationship...
- maybe it's guidance on what to do in some situation.

And I'd charge you to take it seriously the same way David did.

- Have you LOOKED TO GOD?
 - Have you given ample time
 - to prayer and scripture
 - to inform this decision?
- Have you LOOKED TO OTHERS?
 - Have you sought, not just your crew,
 - but wise counsel to get their input?
- And finally, have you LOOKED FOR SIGNS?
 - Any open doors?
 - Any confirmations from God...
 - that this might be his direction for you.

Any one of those alone could be misinterpreted...that's what Saul did.

- But David,
 - looking at all three,
- knew the direction God was leading him.

ENDING

"But what if,

- *after attempting to discern all three of those things,*
 - *I still don't know?*
- *What if I still have a couple of faithful options left?"*

Well, then...

- you get to choose...
- you make the call.

If you take all those steps of discernment,

- and there's still a choice to be made,
- then God's answer to you is:
 - *"You choose."*

"Well, what if I make the wrong choice?"

You won't, cause you've been seeking him the whole way.

- And if you're seeking him in the process...
- And you're seeking him in the decision...
- And you keep seeking him after that...

He'll keep leading you.

That's how you discern.

That's HOW YOU KNOW.

Let's pray.

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 CONSULTED:

- Davis, Dale Ralph. Focus on the Bible. 1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart.
- Davis, Dale Ralph. *A Man of Sorrows*.
- Tsumura, David Toshio. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. The First Book of Samuel.