**ROAD TRIP! Wk 6: Driving in the Dark**

**The scene - lights go out… a noise… movement… walk toward it… the door slowly opens… We wonder, “what are you doing?!” (night vision goggles, images) Something about the dark makes things scarier.**

**We’ve been talking about knowing & walking in God’s will for our life. The adventure of following God’s will!**

**What do you do when you hit some dark road – the sun is not in sight.**

**Late night driving (some have night blindness) driving in a deep haze – heavy rain. What do you do? Pull over – or push through?**

**Or worse - if you’ve ever been broken down at night (ski trip flats)**

**To answer that – we are going to read one of the stranger and scary stories of the Bible. Facing Fear In The Darkness**

**Howl of coyote- slow walk- snap of a twig- shrouded figure- candle in window- knock on a door- old woman – a witch. Might wonder, is this really in the Bible? You won’t find this in a children’s bible**

**The Story Behind The Story:**

**Israel called to be separate – different – Holy – The LORD will be your king. But they want a king. So they have an election. They pick SAUL.**

**Amalekites = ruthless, savage, violent, murders. God says (thru Samuel) bring justice to their evil. Wipe them out, get rid of everything. Saul dose it, sort of. He keeps everything he wants.**

**1 Samuel 15:1-35 (Samuel the prophet confronts him – Saul says it was a success and did everything God said. Samuel says – you are King – and were given specific instructions from God. You did not!) 20 “But I did obey the Lord,” (no) Saul insisted. “I carried out the mission he gave me. (no) I brought back King Agag, but I destroyed everyone else. (not what God told him) 21 Then my troops brought in the best of the sheep, goats, cattle, and plunder (not what God told him) to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal.” (I’m going to tithe from it!) 22 But Samuel replied, “What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. 23 Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So, because you have rejected the command of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.” (Saul then says he felt pressured by people)**

**They continue to argue – Sam turns to leave and Saul grabs him to hold him back and it rips his cloak. (oooooh) Sam says – as you tore my coat, God will tear this kingdom from you!**

**Saul and Sam never reconcile - 1 Samuel 25:1 – Samuel dies and is buried.**

**The next 15 yrs - Saul drifts far from God - worships false idols. God picks a new king, DAVID. But Saul runs him out of town – to kill him.**

**15 yrs later - the enemy army lines up to attack Israel! 1 Samuel 28:4 (NLT) The Philistines set up their camp at Shunem, and Saul gathered all the army of Israel and camped at Gilboa. (split kingdom in 2) 5 When Saul saw the vast Philistine army, he became frantic with fear. (Deadly attack eminent. Saul is - scerd)**

**Repetitive defining characteristics of Saul: Fear – Fear of future, fear of death, fear of lost possessions, fear of unexpected problems, fear of what everyone else thinks. These are clear signs you’re living apart from God.**

**6 He asked the Lord what he should do, but the Lord refused to answer him, either by dreams or by sacred lots or by the prophets. (he tried prayer, tried religion, tried formulas- nothing)**

**Saul was not crying out to God – for God. He was crying out to God to get him out of a jam. Rather humbly on God’s terms.**

**Saul want’s success. Saul expects God to show up like a genie. Many do that. God does not show up on our terms.**

**7 Saul then said to his advisers, “Find a woman who is a medium, (anyone know a witch?) so I can go and ask her what to do.” His advisers replied, “There is a medium at Endor.” (witch of Endor – isn’t that where all the ewoks live?)**

**God strictly forbids use of mediums, fortunetellers, seances, necromancy / consulting the dead, & those who call on spirits. (Lev 19:31, 20:6, 27, Deut 18:9-14 = abomination) - V3. Saul had even banned them from the land… (I think they moved to Hogwarts)**

**8 So Saul disguised himself by wearing ordinary clothing instead of his royal robes. Then he went to the woman’s home at night, accompanied by two of his men.“ (an 8 mile road trip) I have to talk to a man who has died,” he said. “Will you call up his spirit for me?” 9 “Are you trying to get me killed?” the woman demanded. “You know that Saul has outlawed all the mediums and all who consult the spirits of the dead. Why are you setting a trap for me?” (what kind of fortune teller is this – she can’t see thru a costume in front of her) 10 But Saul took an oath in the name of the Lord and promised, “As surely as the Lord lives, nothing bad will happen to you for doing this.” (Irony, Saul making an oath on God, running from God- don’t worry about God’s judgment. I got you!) 11 Finally, the woman said, “Well, whose spirit do you want me to call up?” “Call up Samuel,” Saul replied. (Bad idea - ring up a man of God in a demonic ritual)**

**12 When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed, (not used to it working – she screams. Usually I just fake it… but whaaa!) “You’ve deceived me! You are Saul!” 13 “Don’t be afraid!” the king told her. (I’m not afraid of you! I’m afraid of him!) “What do you see?” “I see a god (a spirit) coming up out of the earth,” she said. 14 “What does he look like?” Saul asked. “He is an old man wrapped in a robe,” she replied. Saul realized it was Samuel, and he fell to the ground before him. (a problem of Saul – he respected Samuel a man, more than God) 15 “Why have you disturbed me by calling me back?” Samuel asked Saul.**

**Is God really using a witch to bring up a dead prophet of God? Be assured she is not in control – she is surprised and unprepared! She did not summon him – God sent him. She is scared to death!**

**The afterlife – in the OT. NT = we died and then judgement.**

**For a reason only God knows – God allowed this to happen.**

**15 “Why have you disturbed me by calling me back?” Samuel asked Saul. “Because I am in deep trouble,” Saul replied. “The Philistines are at war with me, and God has left me and won’t reply by prophets or dreams. So, I have called for you to tell me what to do.” (God won’t take my calls – so I called you)**

* **What desires is a humble, broken, contrite heart**
* **Saul, had he just repented – with humility…**

**16 But Samuel replied, “Why ask me, since the Lord has left you and has become your enemy? 17 The Lord has done just as he said he would. He has torn the kingdom from you and given it to your rival, David. 18 The Lord has done this to you today because you refused to carry out his fierce anger (justice) against the Amalekites. (This will not change, because your heart has not changed) 19 What’s more, the Lord will hand you and the army of Israel over to the Philistines tomorrow, and you and your sons will be here with me. (in Sheol) The Lord will bring down the entire army of Israel in defeat.”**

**You will lose - the nation will be divvied – and your sons will die tomorrow. Goodbye.**

**20 Saul fell full length on the ground, paralyzed with fright because of Samuel’s words. (unmovable – he sits there a few hours) 25 She brought a meal to Saul and his advisers, and they ate it. Then they went out into the night.**

**Lessons From the Dark Road - The Witch’s Tent Breakdown**

**Saul’s desperate, direct, defiance and disobedience to God tells us…**

1. **Small compromises lead to full out demonic disobedience**

**You may never pray to Satan or visit a witch, but a habit of small sins will ultimately lead to bigger problems.**

**1 Sam 15:23 Rebellion (intentional disobedience) is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness (outright defiance) as bad as worshiping idols. (Saul did both)**

**2 Interesting connections: Rebellion as witchcraft / defiance as idolatry**

**Rebellion & in-subornation to God is demonic - meaning they are inspired by the same person, Satan. When you attempt to remove the LORD from his place of authority in your life you align w/Satan.**

**Truth is - you worship whatever you depend on for fulfillment and security. When it’s anything over than The LORD God – it’s idolatry.**

**You’ve never gone to a witch, but you treat money like a god – your worry about, selfish with it, revolve life around it… or a relationship, your family, career, education, entertainment**

**This story reminds us – that many times – our trials are a direct result of our own sinful choices. A result of an outright disobedience to God.**

**James 1:13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. (lust) 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; (Sin) and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (Death) \* Spiritual LSD – the pill of disobedience**

**Like a chain link, how many links need to break before you lose a haul? Just one…**

1. **“Time may heal all wounds,” but not sins**

**Time may heal hurt and some pain – but the only thing that can heal sin is the cross of Jesus Christ. That is why the cross was necessary.**

**What Saul was really dealing with was – his sin.**

**In his pride he would not turn from his sin 15 running from God- he had been driving down the wrong road ever since.**

**All he really needed to do was U-Turn. Repent = U-turn (change of mind)**

**Acts 3:19 Now repent (U-turn) of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. 20 Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and he will again send you Jesus, your appointed Messiah.**

**Had he only turned around - or stopped defending his behavior. But - he continued in rebellious defiance. How about you?**

**Time cannot heal that sin. Forgetting about it won’t change it. Tucking it away, won’t make it go away. The only remedy for sin is the shedding of blood – the cross.**

**1 John 1:7 (NLT) But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. 9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.**

1. **We really aren’t seeking God if we are chasing after blessings instead of repentance (****Jeremiah 29:12-14, Matt 7:7-8, Lam 3:25, Ps 119:10, Ps 27:8, ps 14:2, Job 5:8-9, James 4:8, 2 Chron 7:14)**

**We come to God to get right w/ God – for God to shape us – correct us – rearranged us – to learn how to follow his will. But if you come to get blessed… you’re not really seeking God. You’re seeking pleasure.**

**Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**

**Saul was only seeking God to get a blessing for the fight ahead – he wanted success. Saul is a great example of people who fill churches each week. Who don’t want to be right with God – but only want to be blessed. We want God sprinkles.**

**We really aren’t seeking God if we are chasing after favor instead of faithfulness.**

**After a season of wandering from God - God tells Israel this - Deut 4:29 - But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul.**

**Good news – it’s not too late to U-turn**

**Isaiah 55:6 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. / Psalm 63:1 You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.**

**Are you desperate for God – or desperate for a fix from God?**

**Q - Are your prayers more - God give me or God make me?**

1. **The darker our road gets, the brighter God’s plan seems**

**The darkest day of their life – corrupt politicians and leaders – occult and demonic activity is rampant – it all seemed hopeless…**

**God says, I can work with this. And – I’m gonna to have fun scaring this witch… God, you can’t do that! Of course I can…**

**I see prayer cards, talk to people, talk w/ friends. I am weary of hearing of: cancer, divorce, sickness, bankruptcy, drug addiction… Darkest of days for some of you - may seem like you’re in a witch’s tent. Scared…**

**In the darkest of days, in dark places, God says - I have a plan. I’m still working. That terrible defeat of Israel, set in motion the reign of King David. That dark day for Israel – was the beginning of new life.**

**If you are a follower of Jesus Christ – be reminded this is as close to hell as you will ever get. (trials / pain / sickness / loss). But if you are not a follower of Jesus – this is as close to heaven as you will ever live.**

**I love how A. Paul says this - 2 Corinthians 4:3 And even if our gospel is veiled, (hidden/ covered/ in the dark) it is veiled to those who are perishing. (they can’t see it) 4 The *(false)* god of this age (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. 6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.**

**As the road around you seems to get darker and darker – look to the rock! Look to the face – of the LORD Jesus!**

**I think of that iconic movie poster from Close Encounters – the light over the horizon. In the dark… the light shines bright!**

**John 1:4 In him (Jesus) was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (NLT - the darkness can never extinguish it.) (Acts 26:18)**

**No matter how dark, Jesus is in charge and will overcome!**

**Taking It Home - When the Road seems dark… Our response:**

**(VS on fear: 2 Timothy 1:7-14, Isaiah 41:10, 43:1, John 14:27, Philippians 4:6-7, Psalm 23, 27:1, 91:1-16, Joshua 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:6-7, Romans 8:14-17, 38-39)**

**Fear, timidity, anxiety can stop us in our tracks. It can keep us from using the opportunities and abilities God gives us - and it can often down a sinful back road. So, what do we do with the fear?**

**2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, (attitude / sense of fear and worry – the breath of fear) but of power, love, and self-discipline. (sound mind)**

**Chemical deficient illnesses: clinical depression / bipolar, etc. Sometimes God heals… and sometimes it’s a walk of faith.**

**Whether it’s chemical, emotional, physical, or worry…**

**When the Road seems dark – In Christ remember you have…**

* **Power = boldness & confidence through the HS – humility / serving**
* **Love = compassionate and caring – bold in love!**
* **Self-discipline = clear minded = clear choices. Calm - not frazzled)**

**Our response to the fearful roads is love and Hope, never animosity and anxiety.**

**1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love (Jesus in us) drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. (Because Jesus loves me – I am free. Jesus has me – I’m his kid)**

**If you are living in fear - if the road seems dark and confusing - seek the face of God – experience the perfect love of Jesus.**