

We forget many acts of grace done for us – whether done by God or other humans. It is refreshing to see that at the end of 1 Samuel some people still remember Saul's goodness to them. Gratitude is a wonderful thing.

Does this prompt you to think about showing some kindness to someone else?

What have you learnt about God and about yourself from your study of 1 Samuel?

## Pray

This study has been written to accompany a sermon series at St Columb's Anglican Church Hawthorn. It is written for small group and personal study. It is meant as a resource so feel free to select the parts that are most useful to you or your group. It is advised that you at least do the section "Getting Inside the Passage," some parts of "Personal Application" and "Pray." The section "Going Further" will take you further into the 1 Samuel and the Bible as a whole.

With acknowledgement and thanks to Rev. Peter MacPherson  
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# 1 Samuel 31 Small Group Study Material

## Suicide

### Context

The Philistines are again attacking Israel. Saul is in desperate trouble. He has been told in chapter 28 that he is going to lose this battle and that he and his sons will die.

In chapter 29 David is among the Philistines pretending to be loyal to Achish. The Philistine leaders convince Achish to send David away and thus he is saved from having to fight against Saul.

In chapter 30 he leads his men in battle against the Amalekites who have destroyed Ziklag. David is portrayed as a leader who is blessed by God.

The contrast with the Saul of chapter 31 is complete.

### Getting Inside the Passage

1-3

Samuel's prophecy from 28:19 begins to come true. What comment would you make that despite everything that his father has done to David, Jonathan has remained with Saul to the end?

4-7 Saul's death.

Saul dies by his own hand. His armour-bearer refuses presumably because of Saul's status. The Philistine victory is overwhelming (v.7).

A different version of these events is given in 2 Sam 1:6-10. Here an Amalekite youth claims to have killed Saul, possibly to win David's favour. 2 Sam 1:11-15 give David's honourable reaction which is consistent with his earlier refusals to kill Saul himself.

8-10 Saul's body desecrated.

What Saul feared in v.4 happens. This completes the ignominy of his end. The beheading and stripping of the weapons reminds us of David's actions after he defeated Goliath (chapter 17).

11-13 A last act of grace.

Saul's first action as king had been to rescue the people of Jabesh Gilead (chapter 11). They never forgot this and now at the end of his life they come and rescue Saul's body.

David commends Jabesh Gilead for their kindness to Saul (2 Sam 2:4-7). Eventually David had the bodies exhumed and buried in the family grave at Zela (2: Sam 21:11-14).

### **Going Further**

Of Saul's sons only Ishbosheth (Ishvi in 14:49) survived. See 2 Sam 2:8ff

Saul is the only significant leader in the Old Testament to die by suicide. Judas is the most famous in the New Testament. What pastoral and theological issues does suicide raise?

What do you think is the main point of the book of 1 Samuel?

### **Personal Application**

How do you respond to Saul's suicide?

Saul started so well and yet his ending is so tragic. What have you learned from this?