

1 Samuel 15: Rejection of the Living God

1. In King Saul's conversation with the prophet Samuel, identify each explanation Saul gives for his actions toward the Amalekites (there are five or six). After identifying them together, what do you think Saul genuinely believes about his actions, and why?
2. Review the table below, which describes seven common but often unconscious ways people approach God in their hearts. Discuss which of these perspectives may help explain Saul's understanding of God.
3. Looking again at the table, identify which perspective you personally find most tempting or appealing. Share how this way of viewing God has shaped your own attitudes or actions. Then respond to the pastoral question associated with that perspective, perhaps in the form of a confession. Please be attentive and prayerful toward anyone who shares personally.
4. Read 1 Samuel 15. From the text itself, identify the character and nature of the Living God, paying attention to his names, actions, and spoken words. As a group, how would you fill in the biblical portrayal of God in 1 Samuel 15 and all of Scripture?

View of God	Definition	A person might say...	Pastoral Question
Controllable God	A god who must make sense to us and operate within our understanding before we will obey.	"I just don't think God would ask something that doesn't make sense to me. Once I understand it, then I can obey."	What do you do when God asks something of you before it makes sense?
Transactional God	A god who rewards faithfulness with favorable outcomes and can be obligated by our obedience.	"I've been faithful, I pray, I serve—so I trust God will take care of this for me."	How would your trust in God change if obedience did not lead to the outcome you hope for?
Safe God	A god who affirms but never confronts, and who does not disrupt comfort or identity.	"God knows my heart. He wouldn't expect me to change something that feels so natural to who I am."	Has God ever loved you enough to ask you to change something that felt deeply comfortable?
Reduced God	A god confined to religious moments who does not claim authority over the whole of life.	"Faith is important to me on Sundays. The rest of life, I just try to be a good person."	In what parts of your life do you most assume God is content to remain uninvolved?
Cultural God	A god shaped by social, political, or cultural values who reinforces our assumptions rather than challenges them.	"God is clearly on our side in this. Our values line up with what He wants."	When was the last time your faith seriously challenged your political, social, or cultural assumptions?
Fear-Based God	A god obeyed primarily out of anxiety or fear of punishment rather than trust and love.	"I try not to mess up, because you never know when God might decide you've gone too far."	What would it look like to obey God out of trust rather than fear?
Personalized God	A god customized to individual preference whose authority never conflicts with personal autonomy.	"My relationship with God is personal. What He asks of me might not be the same for anyone else."	How do you discern the difference between God's leading and your own preferences?
Living God			