

### **into discussion**

Ask everyone to answer the question “To what extent do you judge people by their appearance or physical characteristics? Is it ever really possible to tell anything about someone’s character from their looks?”

### **into God's presence**

We are going to meditate on a couple of verses from 2 Corinthians, and use them as the inspiration for our prayers of worship. It would help if everyone can see a Bible. Slowly read 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 a couple of times. Ask everyone to read them again quietly, picking out all the things that they say God has done for us. Reflect for a minute on each of them and what they mean for you today – for instance, what does it mean to you that it is God who makes you stand firm in Christ...? After a few minutes quiet meditation, invite the group to respond in short prayers of worship and thanks.

### **into God's word**

Read 1 Samuel 9:1-10:27 and think about the following questions together:

- Remembering everything that Samuel had to say when the people first asked for a king (chapter 8), how do you imagine Saul would have felt about Samuel’s announcement?
- In what ways did God demonstrate to Saul that He was with him?
- In what ways did God demonstrate to all the people that He was with Saul?
- The scroll that Samuel wrote in 10:25 is lost to us, so we can only speculate on what it might have contained. Based on our last study, and recalling Deuteronomy 17:14-20, what kind of regulations do you think it might have contained?
- The description of God pouring his Spirit out on Saul in 10:6 and 10:9-11 is possibly the closest parallel the Old Testament has to the experience of being ‘baptised in the Holy Spirit’, as described in the New Testament. We are soon going to discover that Saul was still far less than perfect, what indication do you see that God had “changed him into a different person” or “changed his heart”?

### **into life**

Ask the group to get into pairs or threes to discuss and pray through the following:

Why do you think that Saul hid? Was it genuine humility? Doubts about what God had said? Fear of the task that lay before him? Fear of what people might say or do to him? Lack of confidence in his own abilities?

Most of us are sometimes held back from serving God in all the ways we could because of fears or insecurities. Are there any areas in your life where you can see this happening at the moment? If you feel able to, share what your fears are, otherwise just share what area of your life or ministry they affect.

Pray for one another, asking specifically that the Spirit of God would come in transforming power in the way He did upon Saul.

## **back-page background**

The identification of Saul as God's chosen king seems to have taken place in two quite different ways. First God spoke prophetically to Samuel, directing him to anoint Saul as Israel's king (1 Samuel 9:17). He did so in a private ceremony which was apparently kept as a secret between the two men (1 Samuel 10:15-16). Some time later Samuel called an assembly of all of the people and, without any reference to what had gone before, proceeded to select the new king by drawing lots (1 Samuel 10:20-21).

The practice of seeking God's will by using lots was commonplace and unquestioned in early Israel, although the practical means by which this was carried out are no longer known. Lots were used to divide the land between the tribes of Israel (Numbers 26:55) and to determine who was guilty of disobedience to the Lord's commands (Joshua 7:14-15). It is important that we understand that this was neither seen as being random, nor as some form of magic. The casting took place before God and it was accepted that He alone

controlled the outcome. "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33).

We shall encounter this form of seeking guidance a number of times in the stories of Saul, David and Solomon. David in particular used the "Urim and Thummim", which were carried by the High Priest attached to the priestly ephod or breastplate, to determine God's will. (See 1 Samuel 23:9-12 for an example). Scholars have speculated that these were tokens that in some way denoted positive or negative answers to questions phrased in simple "yes" or "no" terms, although there must have also been the possibility of no answer being given as sometimes they were consulted and God did not reply (1 Samuel 28:6).

The author of 1 Samuel did not think it necessary to explain the procedure that was used to draw lots. He just took it for granted that God would use the lot to bring about his will.