

The
Kingmaker
Camp Schedule and Devotion Book



BAYVIEW CHRISTIAN CAMP

JUNIOR WEEK

JULY 14-19, 2002

JEFF COMBS, DEAN

Kingmaker Camp Devotional
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Welcome!

We are excited to have you on board for a wonderful week of camp. You may not know this, but, people have been praying for you and for this camp for a long time. You are that important to us!

We have had one simple goal for this camp. We have set out to make this the best camp that you have ever attended. We have worked hard to ensure that you will have the best worship that we can provide. The group lessons have been carefully selected with you in mind. We have assembled the best labs that we can (with no money of course). We have strived to make the games and activities very enjoyable and memorable.

You will be doing things that have never been done at Bayview Christian Camp. You will be doing things that you have never done before?

You may ask yourself why would they go to this much bother over a week of camp. Well first of all, you are important enough for us to do this the best that we can. Secondly, because what we have to tell you this week can change your life and the lives of those around you.

Kingmaker is a fun Christian camp for ages 10-12. The story of Kingmaker is set in Ancient Britain and Wales. Therefore, there will be some medieval styled music, decorations, crafts and food to liven up the camp a bit. The story is based on the legends of Merlin and King Arthur.

The spiritual characteristic of the camp comes from the story being a retelling of the Samuel's establishment as a leader, then the baton being passed on to Saul then David. This lesson is on obedience. If we choose not to obey God, He will bless somebody else who will obey him.

Camp Staff

We have assembled the best staff that a camp can ever have. You are really blessed to have such an all-star ensemble of helpers this week.

Deans

Jeff Combs – Herald

Mark Reeves – Armourer

Cooks

Laura Combs – Cook

Trisha Johnson – Assistant

Counsellors and Team Leaders

Jason McVicar—Squire

Jane Conley—Castle Matriarch

Shannon Mitchell—Damsel in Distress

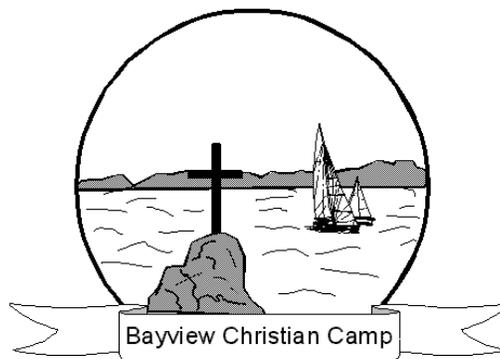
Angie Rogerson—Damsel in Distress

Princess Shania—Purveyor of the Realm

Camp Rules

All campers will be required to abide by the following rules during their time at Bayview Christian Camp. The Dean reserves the right to dismiss any camper who deliberately disregards these rules.

- No tobacco, alcoholic beverages or illegal substances on campgrounds at any time during the week.
- Language deemed profane or obscene will not be tolerated.
- No camper is to leave camp grounds except with permission from the Dean.
- All campers will be expected to participate in all scheduled activities, except where health factors prevent this.
- No portable radio, cassette/compact disc players (or tapes and CD's), televisions, personal video games, or similar electronics will be allowed, unless required for scheduled camp activities.
- Campers & staff will be expected to conduct themselves in a Christian manner at all times.
- All clothing must be modest and appropriate for a Christian environment. Campers wearing inappropriate clothing will be asked to change at the Dean's discretion.
- Anyone wishing to visit the camp during the week is asked to contact the Dean by phone, before visiting, and then immediately upon arrival at the camp.
- There will be no refunds issued in cases of dismissal from camp.
- In the event a camper is unable to attend at the last minute as a result of unforeseen circumstances, a written request must be made in order to receive a full refund.



1 Timothy 4:12 *"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."*

Daily Schedule

8:00 – Once Upon A Time

8:30 – Breakfast

9:15 – Worship

9:30 – Armoury

10:30 – Feast

11:00 – The Kingmaker (Deep Spiritual Moments)

11:30 – Castle Clean up

12:00 – Mid-Day meal

12:30 – Dragon Slaying and Tournaments

2:00 – Free Time (some organized Recreation)

3:30 – Feast

4:30 – Ready for Dinner

5:00 – Evening Meal

6:00 – Labs

7:00 – Armoury

8:00 – Worship

8:30 – Bonding time with Uncle Jeff

9:15 – Feast

9:30 – Evening Activity

10:30 – Campfire or Circle and Vespers

11:00 – To Cabins and get ready for night

11:30 – Good Knight



Sunday Schedule

4:00 – Registration

5:00 – Evening Meal

6:00 – First Group Time (introductions and group bonding moments)

7:00 – Worship

8:00 – Bonding time with Uncle Jeff

8:30 – Knighting Ceremony!

9:30 – Drive In Movie!! Closing Circle rather than campfire after movie.

11:00 – To Cabins and get ready for night

11:30 – Good Knight

Friday Schedule

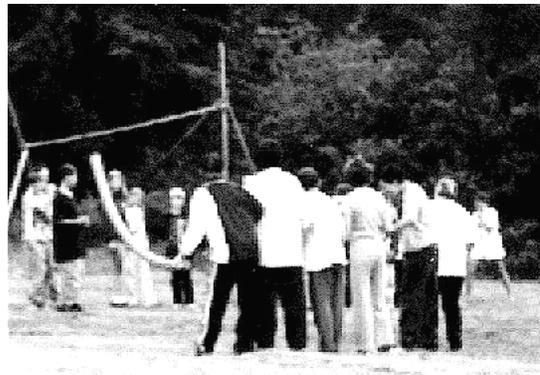
8:00 – Once Upon A Time

8:30 – Breakfast

9:00 – Kingdom Clean up - no one leaves until the camp is clean

9:45 – Closing circle

10:00 – And They All Lived Happily Every After (Go Home)





The Kingmaker

by Jeff Combs



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Prologue Devotion – The Point of Change

The field mouse was busy scurrying to find a new home. Farmer Rystock had just cleaned out the meadow to plant some turnips and leeks. The poor field mouse was left homeless and helpless. As it searched for a new home, it attracted the attention of the young grey cat named Hobbles. He was the feline protector of Farmer Rystock's field and was looking for a quick meal as he quickly cornered this desperate rodent. Things were looking good for a feline feast when the brush of air from behind him made the hair stand up on his back. The winds were changing.

A hawk swooped down from the sky. The cat was so focused on its prey that it did not realise that it had become the hunted. That was the way of things. The winds of change often come and give the upper hand to someone else. It was not a good day for the mouse. It was not a good day for the cat. Even the hawk knew that the day held no guarantees.

To this day, nothing has really changed.

Taliesin called back his hawk before he made his kill. The cat was spared, for today. So was the mouse. It was time to move on. Taliesin was interested in bigger game. He would not eat a cat. A rabbit was a different story. He knew that there was a warren just over the ridge. However, it was very close to Farmer Rystock's newly tilled field. The rabbits were probably on the run. Taliesin wanted to know where the new home would be of his beloved rabbits. He loved the smell of roasting coney.

The rabbits eluded Taliesin this day. However, he would find them once again. There were few men who could track as well as the great Taliesin. He was a warrior and beloved of his people. He served the land and his Lord. He feared God and most would have viewed him as blessed of God. Except that he had no heir. He and his wife were barren. In those days, it was considered as a curse or a sign that God was not satisfied with him. This grieved him and his wife, Henna.

They were a favoured couple in the area. Henna had some relations to the former Roman Emperor (it was only less than a century since they ruled the land). Taliesin was the son of a great warrior. Elphin, son of Gwid, was the chief protector of his tribe. Taliesin was being groomed to follow after his father. However, since he had no heir, it looked like that task could fall to another.

Henna was not home. He was not surprised. He knew that she would be at the abbey in Dyfed. She went there daily to offer up prayers. Henna would pray for Taliesin's safety and for the safety of her people. He also knew that she would pray for her to receive one the greatest of all God's gifts to a couple, a child.

Soon after he had stored his bow and began to fasten new arrows, there was a slight sound of someone entering their shelter. Taliesin did not look up, but simply stated, "No meat tonight. I have failed today, but tomorrow we will have double."

"Do not worry, my love" smiled Henna as she pecked a small kiss on his cheek. "I have already baked a few loaves of bread and the turnips have been cooked that were harvested yesterday. It will be a king's feast. After all, it is a time of celebration."

That was odd. Although Henna was never a moody lass (like her mother, mind you), she was never so aloof as that evening. Taliesin looked up and almost fell over. Henna had a strange glow about her. It was as if the sun was rising in her eyes, but the sun had just set. Something was different.

"Do you have something to tell your husband dear wife?"

"No, not yet at least. But I know, I feel or sense or something like that. It will be soon, very soon. I just know somehow God is answering our prayers. It will be soon."

"So I will find the new rabbit warren after all?" Henna stared back at husband to see his smirk. "I am kidding, of course. I am excited, but I just want to be somewhat reserved. Hope can be a dangerous thing. We have been hurt before."

She answered confidently, "Have faith my love, have faith."

Henna's faith was rewarded. Very soon she was with child. She bore a son, though it was with difficulty. Both mother and child seemed to grow stronger from the experience. They were joyful and the whole village sang out in celebration.

At the celebration Henna proclaimed that she would take the child to the monks as often as she could to learn to read and to praise and serve God. Taliesin bragged that he was going to train his son to be a hunter and protector of the village. The locals stated that they would have to be on their guard for such a high standing lad. They named the boy Merlin (which means fortress on a hill).

A villager joked, "What is he to be then? A priest or warrior?"

"He will be both," responded Taliesin.

"How can he be both?" asked the people?

"He will be a great chief, a wise protector of his people and God's servant" announced Elphin, the father of Taliesin.

No one said a word about the boy's future again that evening. When the quiet protector spoke, the people knew that it was to come to pass.

Prologue Lesson – The Birth of Samuel

We see in this story, the beginnings of Merlin the wise. In our devotion, we are comparing Merlin to the biblical character Samuel. He is found in the book 1 Samuel. Both men were leaders. Both were considered to be prophets. Both men used their gifts and wisdom to benefit God and country. Finally, both men were kingmakers. Some would say that they held more power than the kings themselves.

We are not as sure about the birth of Merlin. There were a couple of Welch leaders named Merlin or Myrddin. However, there are a lot of legends that make detection of the real Merlin all but impossible.

By contrast, we are blessed by a more definitive account of Samuel. His birth was a miraculous birth. His mother appeared to be barren and she prayed to God and he heard her prayer. Here is the account of his birth.

There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. And because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. Elkanah her husband would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the LORD's temple. In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine."

"Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been

drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."

When the man Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vow, Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, "After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always."

"Do what seems best to you," Elkanah her husband told her. "Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the LORD make good his word." So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there. 1 Samuel 1:1-28.

Samuel, much like our character Merlin, was born under special circumstances. His parents acknowledged that he was a gift from God. They set him aside at an early age, so he would learn to use his gifts and opportunities for God's glory.

We, too, are a gift from God. Maybe our birth was not as dramatic as Samuel's or Merlin's. But we are no less a special gift from God. If we are wise, then we will set ourselves aside to serve God as well. We will see that God has given us our gifts and our talents to bless him and his church. If we choose not offer them to God, then God will choose another to bless. This entire story is about such a transition. The mantle moves from one person to another. Therefore, we should use our opportunities to serve God when we can.

What are your spiritual gifts?

How have you let God use your gifts and opportunities?

How have you not let God use your gifts and opportunities?

Chapter One Devotion – Praying in the Abbey

Hobbles was no longer a kitten. He was getting up in years. Eight years old was not too old for a cat, but he was not as fast as he once was. He was not the strongest or fastest hunting cat anymore. But he was much smarter. The gifts of cunning and patience fall to the one with more experience.

Of course these field mice that he was hunting were not the same mice that he was chasing seven and a half years earlier, as a kitten. No doubt, they were descendents of the same scoundrels. Farmer Rystock's land was growing, but not that fast. He was now a squire, a gentleman and not simply a land owner (which was in its own right prestigious and worthy of great honour).

Up on a rock and behind a log, the cat hid, very patiently. A group of four field mice were busy searching and digging. They were on their guard; but they could not see the wise grey cat that learned to use the rock for camouflage and the log for cover. One was wandering away from the group, just a little bit. Hobbles saw his chance. He felt his legs spring him forward over the log to corner the unsuspecting mouse. It came as quite a shock to realise that the mouse was not the only one caught unaware. As soon as he was in the air he felt a gentle breeze above him. The hair on his back bunched up as a painful memory flashed before him. It was that hawk. He had barely escaped from this hawk as a kitten. Surely he was too big for a hawk to devour. His reflexes forced him down on the ground. He landed hard, but on his feet. The hawk missed him, but then as he looked up to the hawk, he realised that the hawk was not after him at all. In its talons, he could make out the movements of a small field mouse. The hawk had beaten him to his meal.

He knew that his chance was also shot at going for the other mice. They had seen him, his cover was blown. He had resolved to find a new spot and slowly sneak back in when they had forgotten about him. Mice did not have long memories, not as long as middle age cats at least. His plan was once again foiled. This time it was from some rambunctious boys. Rystock's young son, Ector, was out gallivanting through the woods and fields of his father's land. Ector was only 6, but that did not keep him from being the terror of the farm. He was out with his cousins Arick and Uther. They were 7 and 4. Uther tried to keep up, but Ector and Arick kept trying to lose him. He was a nuisance, as younger brothers tend to be. They did not let him get too far behind though. Ector feared the wrath of his father, Rystock, if anything should befall young Uther. After all Uther was the favourite nephew of Rystock. It was said that he loved him more than his own father, Maximillian. Maximillian was of mixed Roman and British blood. He was the son of Roman Emperor Constantine and a British noble. Maximillian was a legionnaire and then a commander in the north. Now the Romans had left the Brits to fend for themselves. That is what many of the Brits wanted in the first place, to live under no one's rule. However, they were soon beset with attackers from Ireland, Denmark, Frankland and Saxony. The Irish would just raid the west coast. The Danes pretty much raided the eastern coast, while the Franks threatened them from the south. The Saxons were the biggest threat. They did not just come in to steal and wreak havoc. They were trying to build settlements and stay.

The boys played in the field. They were the kings and heroes of old. They would conquer and fall with the wind. They would mount their mighty steeds of air to rescue the people from the dragons that they had always heard but were never seen. Not all of the boys were playing in the fields. These three were lucky because they were nobles and could do pretty much what they wanted. Many of the children were in the fields of Rystock, but they were working the fields with their families. There was one young boy in the area who was not on the field at all. Although Merlin was the same age as Arick and could claim as rich of a heritage as any of them, he was captive in the tower. He imagined that a great ogre had chained him there to torture him and his family. However, the truth was that Merlin almost liked staying in the abbey with Brother Eliach and the other monks. He did like to read, which he was constantly doing. He did like to pray and to sing. But it was the thought of having to do it that irked him. He wanted to do these things, he just did not want to be told that he *had* to do these things.

The monks were about to come in from their own small field for their afternoon prayers. Merlin was just finishing up another volume by Justin Martyr, when he heard Eliach call to him. Great, he knew that he was

too late. He served as their acolyte and lit the candles and incense before the prayers. It was a simple job, but it was a way that he could feel useful.

“I am coming Brother Eliach!” he cried out.

Brother Eliach gave him a strange look. “What are you worried for, son, you are early for your duties. Not that I mind, it is refreshing to see.”

“But surely you called for me,” responded the wide-eyed youth.

The abbot offered, “You must be mistaken my lad. Go on, light the candles early and perhaps we can use this time for prayer.”

Merlin lit two of the candles and decided to wait till later to light the other candles. He got on his knees near the alter, while Brother Eliach exited the nave and began some preparations in the narthex.

In the quietness, he heard the voice again, this time it was very clear. “Merlin! Can you hear me, my sweet son?”

“I am here where you have placed me.”

“Good, do you know why I have placed you here?”

“I suppose because we always come in here before supper for our afternoon prayers.”

Merlin was startled to hear Brother Eliach walk up behind him. “Who are you talking to lad?”

“It thought it was you, sir. I heard you as clear as day. Except it did not sound altogether exactly like you, if you follow me.”

“I may indeed be following you now my boy. I was in the narthex and the other brothers are just now coming in from the fields. There is only one to whom you were speaking with, that was the Almighty. Stay here lad and continue in your prayers, the brothers and I will pray outside for it is a beautiful day. If you would be so kind to tell me what you have heard later, before you go home my lad.

“Of course, sir.” Answered Merlin with a nervous smile.

Soon, it was quiet again. Merlin had a strong sense of people when the voice had spoken to him before. But since he was told that God Almighty was speaking directly to him, he felt a sense of dread and panic. He thought to himself, “surely the Lord will know that I am not worthy. He must know that I am just a boy and I am not qualified to hear from God.”

“No one is worthy to hear me, my son” answered the voice. “However, I will make you worthy. I will make you qualified, if you are willing.”

“I am, my Lord.”

“Good, I have chosen you, not for your abilities or deeds. I have chosen you as a child because you know me, you fear me, you love me and you obey me. Listen to my words: I smell the blood on their hands from their sins which grieves me. Therefore, I do not need a nose. I can see them wandering about on this earth with no direction. Therefore, I do not need eyes. I hear them wailing in the pain they have caused to themselves and to each other. Therefore, I do not need ears. I can sense them, but they are without sense. They do not know I am here. They do not perceive me. I go to them, but they do not know I am there. Will you be my feet?”

“Yes, my Lord. I will go where you send me.”

“I reach out to them and I touch them, but they do not feel me. Will you be my hands?”

“I will strive to serve you as I can, oh God.”

“I call to them, but they do not listen. Will you be my voice?”

“”Though I am but a child, I will speak whatever you would have me say, my God.”

“I will send you to many places, for many years. I will instruct you to do things that are a blessing to you and to others. I will have you say words you understand, words you embrace and words you dread my dear child. However, today, my message is dreadful, though you will not have to go very far. The brothers of this place claim to know me and worship. Indeed many do. However, there are some who are defiling my name. When they call people to repent of their sins, they are instructing people to give them money, possessions and labour to them in my name. They are using my people. Certainly this abbey will be blessed when someone

gives to them for me out of love. But what is going on is hurting people and blaspheming me. To add to this grief, the abbot turns his head and pretends not to see, but he does. He does not indulge in such practices, but he has not put a stop to them. Therefore, he is just as guilty. Tell them to repent. Tell them to repay what they have taken. Tell them to ask the people for forgiveness and to ask me for forgiveness. Tell them to not do it again.”

When the abbot returned, he saw the boy crying. “What is it, my lad? Why do you cry? You have been given a great gift that many of us have prayed to receive for many years.”

“The words I must say are not my own. I do not wish to say them. However, I know that I must. I would rather face your wrath than God’s,” cried out Merlin.

This made Brother Eliach lean back and brace himself. “Out with it then boy. It will do no good if you keep it inside. It will just tear you up and do none of us any good.”

Merlin told him what God had said. He was ashamed, but he was relieved. At long last the cat was out of the bag. The monks were sharing their profits with certain influential members of the community. He felt hopeless to stop them. Now, he knew that he had to do what he must. Rather than embarrass these men in public and cause more hurt than good. He called the monks together for a meeting and prayer. He told them what was said and what was known. There was a sense of shock in the room. Not that their deeds were unknown, but that they were being brought to light in this manner. Some of them started to protest these accusations, but the other monks who were not exploiting the people of the area were able to give more than enough evidence to their deeds. In the end all but one of the monks repented. They issued a public apology at the next mass. They repaid what they could, although many of the people gave it back to the abbey for being honest about what was happening. Only Brother Mortain refused to repent. He grew outraged and bitter. He knew that he was wrong and he knew that everyone knew what he had done. But he still felt ambushed. He grew angry with God and bitter toward the church. He moved to Lyonesse and began to draw others around him who were also bitter, angry and dangerous.

Over the next 15 years Merlin continued to grow in stature and deed. He was seen as leader among his people. They had seen him as wise beyond his years. He studied scripture, medicine and law. He was a tremendous speaker and used his knowledge to settle disputes, bless the people and heal the sick. When his knowledge was not enough, there tended to be a divine intervention. Miracles were happening all over the land. People began to marvel at him. However, there were those who spoke against him. They felt that he was not fit to be a leader. “A priest does not have the blood for battle!” they would cry out. “He is a magician; he uses the dark arts to perform his deeds to control us” others would claim. Many thought that when he spoke words that God gave him with such clarity that he had some kind of crystal ball or other divination. He simply did what the Lord had called him to do.

However, more and more, the people were calling out for a chief to lead them. They demanded that they have their own king. Rome had fallen and could not longer protect them. They felt that a king would save them. They wanted Arick, who grew up to be a powerful warrior to be that leader.

Chapter One Lesson – The Calling of Samuel

Now we move back from Merlin to our man Samuel. He too was raised by the priests. He too was called by God. He too became the voice that God would use to reveal a great injustice being carried out in the name of the Lord. Let’s read from the 3rd chapter of 1 Samuel.

The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family--from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'"

Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son."

Samuel answered, "Here I am."

"What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you." So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, "He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes."

The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD. The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

And Samuel's word came to all Israel. 1 Samuel 3:1-21

Samuel was called by God to serve him. He was called by God to be his voice. He was called by God to go where he was sent. We saw in our Merlin devotion that he received a similar call.

How can two people receive such a similar call? The answer is pretty easy. The call to serve God, to be his voice and to go where he has sent us is not as rare as you might think. Certainly most of us have not heard an audible voice telling us specific instructions and insights into things that we could not otherwise know. We do hear the audible voice of God when those who are serving God speak. But that is different from what Merlin and Samuel experienced.

We are also given the task of being God's voice in this world. That is not just the role of the preacher or pastor. It is not just the job of the Sunday School teacher or Theologian to tell the world what God wants to say, it is our job. We may also find ourselves in places and situations that we could never imagine. It is God who has put you where you are now and God who will put you where you will be 20 years from now.

Having said that, you may want to stop and think now about what you are going to do with your life. I do not mean what job you will work, who you will marry or where you will live. You have plenty of time to work on those things. But you can decide to dedicate your life and service to God now.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. You may have seen a special or two on her life on television or in a magazine. I remember seeing film footage of Her Majesty as she dedicated her life to public service on her 21st birthday. She was a princess at the time, but she was the heir apparent (it was only 5 years before she would take the throne as Queen). She dedicated herself to serve the people. She was saying, in effect, that her life was no longer her own, but it belonged to all of her subjects.

Now, let's bring this back home to us. We have an opportunity to dedicate ourselves to a life of divine service. First of all, we have the opportunity to give our life to Christ and accept him as our saviour. We do this for our salvation, but we also do this to serve him. Maybe you have accepted Jesus as your saviour, but have you really accepted Jesus as your Lord?

What are some of the ways God has called you?

What do you think God wants you to say to people?

If God wanted you to say something that you did not want to say, would you still say it?

Where do you think God wants you to go?

If God wanted you to go somewhere that you did not want to go, would you still go?

Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour?

Have you been baptized?

Have you accepted Jesus as Lord of your life?

Have you dedicated your life to service?

Chapter Two Devotion – Setting the Trap

Eventually there was no cat. “Hobbles” had seen his days pass years ago. He faded. His speed and skills decreased. Eventually, he hunted less and less. One day he did not come back from the field. No one knows how he came to his end. But then again, no one really came to look for him. Ector had grown up. He was the only one who looked after the cat. He was a squire now. He was following a knight to learn to be a knight himself. Farmer Rystock only kept the cat to keep the mice and other pests away. His wife would still feed him, but he was never allowed in the house. One day she noticed that he did not eat his food. So she did not leave any more food out for him. Other creatures would come later to eat his food.

The field mice did notice that there was no more cat on the prowl. It was a gradual process. It was not like they had a mouse community meeting to discuss the meeting. However, each day they were able to travel further. They were able to get into more areas. They were able to get more food. They grew in number and boldness.

You may have heard of the saying, “when the cat is away, the mice will play.” Over time they began to move in most of the nooks and crannies of the farm. The hawks would still try to keep the population down. But the mice were too many. They even made their way into the farm house. Farmer Rystock’s wife was furious. They were getting older and they were too tired to keep up the farm and try to keep the rodents out. They did grow in prominence in the community and in their wealth. They had servants who looked after the farm. However, Farmer Rystock’s wife refused to let anyone but herself have any sort of reign in her home. So, over time the home started to decay, though the farm and land flourished. They knew that they needed a cat, but they never got around to getting one. The mice did not mind.

Back in the village of Caer Dyfed there was a mob calling out for justice. “We need that boy sage, he will know how to handle this!” “What does he know? He is no older than the accused.” “He is a wizard, he knows all.”

There had been a dispute. Bannock was accused of killing a few of Crebin’s goats. “I did no such thing,” offered Bannock in his defence.

“He had two goats on the spit when we arrived,” answered one of Crebin’s goatkeepers, Vallen.

Bannock responded “These are my cousin’s goats; he brought them from Caer Banyr. It is not my fault that you lost your master’s goats.”

Merlin arrived on the scene. Most were relieved, but some scoffed at the idea that such a young man would preside over this quarrel. He weighed the evidence and he asked one simple question, “Where is your cousin, Bannock?”

Bannock’s cousin had returned to his village of Caer Banyr. Luckily, it was only a few hours walk. Merlin proclaimed that he was going to talk to Bannock’s cousin to verify that he had two less goats. He knew that the local villagers, who tended to make everything their business, would be able to verify if there were two less goats.

At first, most of the people followed Merlin to Caer Banyr. But as they began to tire, their confidence in Merlin’s ability to settle the dispute grew. It was not very long till Merlin was the only person on the road.

The walk progressed smoothly and quickly. He did not encounter any bandits or trouble along the way. As he approached the village, the people began to recognize him and warmly greet him. He had seven offers of hospitality before he arrived at the farm of Bannock’s cousin, Bors.

Merlin did not have to ask any questions at all. By the time he had arrived at Bors’ estate, he already knew that Bannock’s story had checked out. The locals told him more information than he cared to know about the doings of the area in the past few weeks. Even though Bannock was cleared, Merlin knew that the dispute would not be settled until he found out what did happen to Crebin’s goats.

Bors invited in the young sage. Merlin checked up on the local news and Bors was able to verify most of what the villagers had already stated, though some information had been exaggerated. Merlin was not surprised at this. But it was the news that Bors had from the village of Caer Dyfed that disturbed Merlin the most.

When Bors was leaving, he thought he heard noises, such as boots and the sound of boats landing. Bors came home quickly to secure his lands. Merlin knew that he had to get home very quickly to rally the villagers to protect the area.

“I am in need of a horse, and I need it quickly.” Merlin stated very abruptly.

Bors offered, “I have two to choose from. One is older, she is very easy to ride, but she is not very fast anymore. The other was just broken. He is fast, but he is wild.”

Merlin was in for a wild ride.

As he rode back on the path, he stopped by a hill to look at the beach. Sure enough, he saw 4 boats landed. They were Danish boats, the markings on the sail and hull gave them away. Two were smaller and the other two were larger. He believed that it was a fairly large force. He was afraid that the forces were going to be larger than the garrison at Caer Dyfed. As he rode back home, he envisioned a battle plan in his head. He knew that he had to draw the Danes to Fibbin’s field. He knew the terrain and his plan was going to save them, or ruin them. He knew that the Danes were not out for blood. They were looking for livestock and possessions. Perhaps that could be effective as a lure.

As soon as he pulled into the village the people were called to the hall. They all came very quickly. Merlin announced that they had to move fast. He had some odd requests. He asked for livestock and some weaker members of the village to serve as decoys. He also asked for as many axes as he could get his hands on. Immediately, the towns people were getting their battle axes. Merlin told them that he did not need axes for people, but for cutting wood. The people were very confused, but they trusted the sage. He left the battle preparations to Arick, whom the people had come to respect as their military commander. He grew to be a strong and capable leader. People were already stating that he would someday take the reigns as king. Merlin took Arick’s brother, Uther, and their cousin, Ector, with him to chop some wood.

Merlin remembered the pillars of wood. The old Roman garrison had planted several oaks in various patterns. There was a place where four very large oaks were planted at each of the corners of the old garrison. The area was left open, like a square field. He had them cut into the trees, not all the way through, but he weakened them at certain points. Ector knew what Merlin was wanting. He had cut wood with his father and uncle for some time. They knew how to make the tree fall where they wanted, which was going to be important. Then he had Uther pour tar on the trees, they were not perfect and there was a lot on the bottom, a little in the middle and nothing on top, but it would work. The trap was set; Merlin knew that it was time to position the bait.

Arick had the warriors ready to go. They made sure to have plenty of archers as well as swordsmen. There were only a few cavaliers, but they were not going to have a normal battle. Merlin would see to that. Arick was briefed by Merlin of his plan. He stood there on his horse and smirked. He thought it was crazy, but it would probably work. He never would have thought of it. However, he appreciated it. It would have been a choice of being raided or killed. Merlin’s choice could still get them all killed, but at least there was a chance of success.

“They are coming!” shouted one of the villagers who was running over the hill. “They saw the goats and they are going for the bait.”

Arick straightened up in his saddle and ordered, “To the field. We must move quickly and not be seen.”

They rode off just minutes before the Danish hunters came over the hill looking for goats and gold. They had a few hounds with them who were acting very excited. The Danes thought that they smelled the goats. The hounds were worked up because they had smelled the troops and the horses. They were so eager for their catch that they did not pay attention to the footprints of the soldiers on the ground. They saw a few goats and pigs in the clearing above. They also saw a few peasants who were tending them. It looked like easy prey. They snuck forward to get their prize. A few Danes caught a goat. That scared the peasants into the woods. The goats and pigs were in a makeshift pen and could not escape. The Danes were pleased that the prey fell into a trap that they could not escape. Their hearts started to pound as the ground thundered beneath their feet as the first tree fell. The second and third tree came down a second later. It was a little bit of a hesitation for

the fourth and final tree to fall down. The Danes were boxed in because Ector had cut the trees with precision so they would fall on the north, south, east and west.

Arick called for the bowmen. They had just a handful of flaming arrows, but they just needed to get the fire going. The tar on the trees was quickly lit. Uther had poured the remaining tar on the field. The Danes were caught by surprise. They tried to get over the northern log where the fire was not as bad. However, Arick had the bowmen ready to launch a storm of arrows when they tried to climb over.

The sound of the Danes burning was almost too much to take, however these men were attacking them, they were killing their children and wives. The people of the village did not enjoy the battle, but they would protect their own with all of their might. Eventually the west log, which had been burning the strongest, started to break apart. In desperation, a group of Danes rushed the log and broke through. Then Arick's men were quickly alerted. There were not many Danes left, but they were veterans of many wars and raids. Luckily only a handful of people from Caer Dyfed fell in the battle. The greatest of these was the great young warrior, Arick.

The people's hearts were broken. They had loved Arick. They were hoping to have a king very soon. Since the Romans had left them to self rule, they had not had much in the way of leadership. There were regional kings. The kingdom of Mercia had a strong king that some felt was going to be the new ruler of the whole land. Vortigen was a capable war leader, but he was a ruthless king. The minor kings and chieftains wanted to band together to defend themselves against the threat of the Saxons who were continuing to come over in more and more numbers. What was really disturbing the local people was the fact that the Saxons were not satisfied with just coming in and raiding as the Danes and Irish were. They were planning on staying.

Rome was no longer a force in Britain, but they still maintained a hold on the mainland of central Europe. The Saxons were migrating out of lands that the Romans were still controlling. Word was that Vortigen had invited the Saxon ruler, Hengest, to live in the Southwest section of England. The Picts, savages from the north, were also strengthening their borders. The Welch of Caer Dyfed were feeling trapped and vulnerable. They started to cry for a king.

Before the expulsion of the Danes, the clear choice was Arick. Some had cried for Merlin, some for Uther, others were supporting Bannock and some desired to have Ector given the crown. Merlin knew that the people needed to have unity if they were to survive. He brought the matter to the Lord in prayer. He spent a week fasting at the Abbey. He knew that he was not going to be King, a thought which comforted him greatly. The longer he prayed, the more the choice fell to Uther Pendragon. Merlin was filled with dread, for he knew that Uther was not prepared for this duty. But then again, none but Arick had been prepared for the crown.

Chapter Two Lesson – Israel Asks for a King

Merlin was a great leader for his people. And yet, they desired someone else to be their king. It was the same for Samuel. He ruled as a judge for many years. In the end, they wanted someone else to be the king. Let's look at the 8th chapter of 1 Samuel to see how the people wanted a king of their own.

When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel. The name of his first-born was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.

So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king

who will reign over them will do."

Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your men-servants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day."

But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."

When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king."

Then Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Everyone go back to his town." 1 Samuel 8:1-22.

I have skipped around a bit in the book of 1 Samuel. We last left him in the 3rd chapter as a boy. We see here in the 8th chapter that he has kids and he has gotten a bit older. That happens from time to time even to the best of us.

The dreaded Philistines continued to raid and invade. This time they stole the Ark of the Covenant, something that was very sacred to the Israelites. Guess who led them in battle to reclaim the Ark? It was not Indiana Jones, but our own man Samuel, the prophet-priest-warrior. He had the people rededicate themselves to God and they were victorious.

Now let's look at Samuel's situation. He was a great leader; there was no question about that. He was wise and people would all come to him for advice, much like Merlin. He was a great warrior. He was respected. More importantly, he served God. But in spite of all those wonderful things about him, the people still wanted someone else to be their king. That must have hurt. But he continued to serve God.

This is where the proverbial rubber meets the road for many of us. Are you willing to continue serving and working, even if you are overlooked (one word)? Are you willing to put all of your energies into making someone else great? Actually, if we think about the teachings of Jesus, isn't that his model? That it is for us to make others greater than ourselves, to be greater by being more of a servant.

What are some of the victories that God has given you?

Have your victories always turned out the way you planned?

Have you had something go wrong and turn out for the better?

Have you had someone else get glory for something that you worked very hard to accomplish? How did that make you feel?

How can you serve in making someone else better?

Chapter Three Devotion – The Rise and Fall of Uther Pendragon

The mice scurried around in a fright-filled frenzy. They were always looking out for danger. Lately, there was danger at every turn. Since the passing of Lord Rystock, this land belonged to a new master, Sir Ector. When Ector inherited his father's land, he brought a few changes. The servants were busy, but well compensated. He expected much, but he gave just as much. He was newly married to Lady Ellen. She was an easy going lady who loved all sorts of animals. She loved horses, goats and dogs. But the love of her life was her cats. She had three cats from the same litter. Her sister's feline was the mother. Smokey, Flame and Torch were very active cats. They loved to play and lay out in the sun. They also loved to hunt for mice. The mice were living in torment, at this time.

Unfortunately, they enjoyed hunting more than mice. They soon found that the young hens were also tasty. For a time, Sir Ector believed that it was a skulk of foxes. At first there was just one or two missing a month. Lately, it seems that he was missing a chicken a week. That was way too much for Sir Ector's workers to accept.

They started to reinforce the perimeter of Sir Ector's lands. That did nothing to slow the chicken depletion problem. Rayf, the huntsman, was asked to come in and track the paw prints around the hen house. He found plenty of chicken tracks, some cat tracks and some mouse tracks. He found nothing else but the tracks of humans. Since the chickens were partially eaten and not carried away, he deduced that it was probably not people. Mice were much too small to take out a chicken. Now, since no one had ever heard of cannibalistic chickens, that left just one kind of suspect.

As Sir Ector was receiving the news of the investigation, he became very annoyed with the soft purring that was making passing sweeps on his leg. He looked down to see Torch affectionately rubbing up against his leg. Across the room he could see Smokey and Flame licking their chops as they were involved in their ritual grooming. He saw that little Torch was trying to manipulate his sympathies. He brought them in to do a job, and they were richly compensated for their work of keeping the mice at bay. Instead, they abused their privilege to exploit the one that they were serving. Sir Ector became quite angry.

The workers in the field could hear the shrieking sound of the cat flying out of the manor.

It had been some time since Uther was proclaimed King of Caer Dyfed. After the Danish attack and the passing of their great warrior, Arick, the people clamoured even more to have a king. Many of the people sought Merlin's wisdom in the matter. He knew that he could make himself the new king. However, he felt that he could better serve as royal advisor. He also knew that Uther would be a better choice for unifying the people where his appointment might cause division. Therefore, he endorsed Uther; and soon afterwards, there was a coronation.

Most people did not know that there almost a cancellation. Uther had to be persuaded to be king. At first he rejected the idea. He did not think that he would be called, so he ignored the proceedings. When he heard that he had been called to be their king, he was mortified. He quickly found Merlin to confide in him.

"I am no king. Clearly, people can see that," proclaimed Uther.

Merlin offered, "But you are their king; clearly the people have chosen you."

"It is not me that they want" confessed Uther. "They want my brother, Arick. Unfortunately, he is dead and I am just a reminder of that great warrior. As long as they desire Arick, they will not be pleased with Uther."

"True, you must be your own man. However, it will either be you as a unifying king or a divided land ripe for plunder," Merlin agreed.

After taking a long breath, Uther confessed, "I can find no more direct way to say this, my friend. I do not want to be king!"

"That is why you, above all others, would make the ideal king. People who covet power are dangerous," remarked Merlin.

The coronation was modest, but the people showed their pride in having a king of their own. It was not just a day for Uther, the Pendragon. It was a day for Dyfed and all of the Welch. It gave them a sense of dignity and identity in who they were.

The honeymoon was short lived. Uther already had his share of scoffers. There were some who were angry that their choice was not called. They had nothing personally against Uther. They were just sore losers.

Unfortunately, Uther took their offence very personally. The Jutes were invading all up the western coast. Uther called for more taxes and troops for the protection effort. There were some lords who were reluctant and even defiant against the new king. They began to form an alliance with Lord Mortain who was ruling most of Lyonesse. He was still bitter about his departure from the Abbey at Dyfed. Rather than send their troops, they seemed to be gathering their own troops.

Merlin was disturbed at these events and sought to seek an audience with Lord Crebin and Sir Nevrim, who were the leaders of this rebellion. When Uther heard about this plan, he grew angry. He was convinced that Merlin was going behind his back to be subversive. Uther wanted Merlin and all to know who was king.

Merlin withdrew his proposal and sought counsel with the king. He made sure that Uther and the people would see this as a sign of submission. However, Merlin wanted to know the king's mind.

Uther planned a military attack against the rebellion. Merlin cautioned him that such an action would leave the people vulnerable for attack by the Jutes who were in a raiding campaign. Uther offered that if they were attacked, then the role of innocent martyrs could help their cause. Merlin wondered if such an action would be perceived as foolish rather than noble. He knew that he could not voice that opinion. Uther's patience was growing shorter by the day.

The campaign was bloody and it quickly turned into a siege. Lord Crebin had fallen in battle and the rebel forces took refuge at Sir Nevrim's castle. Uther continued to gather forces while they waited out the siege. They were held up in the castle for a month, and Uther began to grow impatient. Merlin was also edgy about the threat of the Jutes. He requested to be released so he could rally forces with Lord Bannock in Caer Dyfed.

The king was relieved to have Merlin "the meddler" out of his hair. He had plans that Merlin was not going to approve of. There were some sick livestock nearby that the king ordered to be confined, but not destroyed. He had the diseased carcasses placed in the river that ran to the castle. He poisoned their water supply. He felt that giving them a plague would speed up the battle a bit.

The next week his scouts noticed that the guards on the tower looked very weak and sick. It was then that Uther ordered the creation of battering rams. They stormed the castle and found little resistance. The guards welcomed their demise after this heinous illness. They reached the centre tower to find a healthier bunch of people. There was still some water that was stored for such an occasion. Sir Nevrim's family, as well as the children, were held up in the tower. When Sir Nevrim surrendered, he begged Uther to spare the women and children.

At first, Uther laughed at such a request. Originally, he had no intention of hurting the innocent. However, since his enemy asked him not to, he felt that he must carry out the vicious deed. The soldiers were reluctant to carry out the executions. Uther threatened them with treason if they did not obey him.

It was not the soldiers or the king that saved the innocent that day. It was the face of an angel. They came upon Lord Crebin's widow, Lady Ygraine. She begged the king for mercy for the children. Uther offered that they would be spared if she would be his queen. The look of revulsion was not hidden on her face. However, she was willing to wed her husband's killer if it would save the lives of the children and other women.

The king had expected the reception of a hero when he returned. Instead, he found an abandoned village. Some huts were burnt. There were no people, neither was there any livestock. Some crops were destroyed as was the blacksmith's hut.

They looked for the dead and did not find them. They did not even see a sign of struggle. They deduced that the people were taken captive. They must have been a massive force to have taken all of the people of the village.

A scout came back with a report of where the boats were landed just north and west of the village. The

Jutes had not returned to the boats to take their booty with them. Uther ordered the army to move as quickly as possible. Although their energies were spent after the long siege, they found new resolve when they knew that they might bring their people back. Uther sent a small band of younger men armed with just bows and torches. Their task was not to confront the enemy. They were needed to sabotage them.

The four men moved very quickly. They did not have the burdens of the packs with them, so they were not hindered. The king also chose men of swift feet, so they did not have to wait for anybody. They arrived at the boats before anybody else. They set their torches on to the boats and kicked them off the shore so they would be adrift in the sea, slowly burning. The Jutes would be trapped. They prayed that their forces would be enough to subdue them.

The four turned from the boats and heard screaming from the tree lines. The Jutes had arrived. They were not very pleased. The four realized that they were trapped. One of them made for the last boat that was lit and called for the other three. They swam for the burning ship with as much strength as they could muster. As soon as they got on board, two of them started to row as fast as they could from the shore. Another man was busy putting out the fire they had just started. The last man grabbed a few arrows and loaded up his bow.

The Jutes were not prepared for this type of attack and took an extra minute to ready their bows. The men were too far from shore to retrieve by swimming. They got their bows ready when they heard another shout from the tree line. Uther Pendragon and his forces had arrived just in time.

The battle was fierce, but because the Jutes were surprised, the outnumbered forces of Caer Dyfed were victorious. This battle saw the end of many great warriors. When the battle was won, the troops rallied and their attention was again focused on the missing villagers. They were not with the Jutes and the forces of Uther did not find them in the forest. A feeling of despair overcame the surviving soldiers.

Soon they heard a new sound from the tree line. These were not soldiers. The only warriors were Lord Merlin and Lord Bannock. The rest of the group were women, children, the impaired and the elderly. When Merlin found out that the Jutes were ready to assault the unprotected village, he ordered the villagers to take their families, livestock and greatest possessions to the caves of Ogof.

All of the villagers and livestock were accounted for that day. They even found coins and jewellery on the Jutes to pay for the rebuilding of the village. Nothing could replace the fallen warriors, but Merlin proclaimed that God had saved them that day. King Uther Pendragon grew more and more upset with Merlin. He felt that he was the one who won the victory and that he should be given the glory. He also thought that Merlin was a coward for hiding in the caves, but he did not say that aloud except to a few ears that were closely aligned to him.

Over the next few years, the kingdom of Uther Pendragon grew to cover most of the south-western part of the island, except Lyoness. Many of the unaligned lands respected the strength of Uther Pendragon or the wisdom of Merlin, the sage.

The more powerful Uther became, the more his sanity began to wane. He began to despise his people, his advisors and his family. His son, Jon, was the brunt of many of his attacks. Jon's mother had passed away years earlier. As the years passed, he began to resemble his mother, which threw the king into fits. He did not trust Jon or his stepdaughter, Morgana. She was the daughter of his new wife, Ygraine, and his former rival Crebin. He had Morgana banished from his kingdom at the age of 8. She fled to Lyoness and was raised by King Mortain. Uther viewed Jon as a threat to his throne and sought to kill him. When Jon almost died because his food was poisoned, many assumed that it was the work of one of the king's men, though none would dare speak of it in public. The madness of the king reached its height when Ygraine was with child. Uther grew furious and began to attack Ygraine, so there would not be another contender for his crown. Although Jon was only 12 at the time, he stood up in her defence and pushed himself between the king and queen. The sword that was meant for Ygraine and her child received the young prince. When Uther realized what he had done, he stormed out of the castle. He took his advisors with him. He did not want to be there when the boy, and possibly his wife, would be pronounced dead. In his madness, he reasoned that if he were not there at the moment of death, then he would not be held accountable.

Jon and Ygraine were brought to the home of Lord Merlin. He already had a few nurses at his home. Sir Ector's wife, Ellen, was also with child. She was having a difficult labour. Soon after they arrived, the Queen went into premature labour. After a very long night, the queen had a son. The Queen did not survive the labour. Jon lived long enough to see his new brother Arthur. Ellen's daughter was stillborn. But Merlin had a plan. He knew that Arthur's life would be in danger if the King knew he was alive. Therefore, Sir Ector took the child in as his son. Only Ector, Ellen and Merlin would know the difference. Not even Ector's older son, Kay, would know that Arthur was not his real brother.

Soon Merlin found himself being a fugitive. The king had framed him for the murder of the Queen and the Prince. There was a bounty placed on his head as he found himself on the run. He took cover with a group of monks who were heading toward the Abbey in London. Uther had ordered his knights to slay the monks. The knights refused to attack the men, so Uther charged after them himself. While they were crossing a great river, Uther happened upon the group. Merlin threw a torch at the face of the horse. It panicked and threw its rider. The king was in full armour and when he stuck his back on a group of rocks in the river, the king found that he did not have the strength to lift himself up from the river in his heavy armour. There in the river, the great king, Uther Pendragon, finally fell.

Chapter Three Lesson – Saul Becomes King

Poor Uther. He did not want to be king. In some ways, he started off well. He seemed to have good intentions. Then something happened to him along the way.

I wish I could say that the story of Uther Pendragon is unique. However, it is not. There are countless examples of people who are given talent, time and opportunity just so they can blow it. We see a very similar story in the book of 1 Samuel. We see that Israel gets its first king. At first Saul is like a dream come true. After a while, he is a nightmare.

There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. He had a son named Saul, an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites--a head taller than any of the others. 1 Samuel 9:1-2

They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others. Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people."

Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

Samuel explained to the people the regulations of the kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the LORD. Then Samuel dismissed the people, each to his own home.

Saul also went to his home in Gibeah, accompanied by valiant men whose hearts God had touched. But some troublemakers said, "How can this fellow save us?" They despised him and brought him no gifts. But Saul kept silent. 1 Samuel 10:23-27.

"You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command." 1 Samuel 13:13-14.

We have jumped around a lot in the book of 1 Samuel. If we were to talk about all of the ways that Saul fell flat on his face, then we would be reading for quite a long time.

In some ways, it is a baffling story. In other ways, we should have seen it coming. He seems to have everything that we would ever want in a leader. But sometimes that is the problem. Did you know that, statistically speaking, people who were B average in school tend to be more successful than people who were straight

A students? I do not want you to use this as an excuse for not doing your homework. However, people who have had to struggle, study and work often go further in life than those who seem to have things come to them naturally. Why is that? It is because eventually every one of us will run into a situation that is more than what we can handle. Therefore, if you have walked through life without struggle, then when difficulty hits you, you do not know what to do. It is okay not to be great at everything. It is okay to rely on others for help. It is okay to fall on your face. You just have to get back up.

Saul's problem was not that he made a mistake. He did not repent of his mistakes. He became arrogant and would not acknowledge that what he did was wrong. He insisted on doing things his way. In the end Saul was not the hero he thought he would be. He was the tyrant that everyone despised.

What are you best at doing? Where do you excel in life?

What are you not so good at doing? What is your worst area?

What do you do when you face a tough time or a test that you cannot seem to pass?

What do you think is the greatest trait that God is looking for in a servant?

What do you think God wants us to do when we fall on our face?

Chapter Four Devotion – The Sword in the Stone

Two field mice were fighting over a small piece of grain. It had been a long time since they got anywhere near the house. The tyranny of the three oppressive cats was over, but they became content with staying in the field. They were after all, field mice.

A third mouse began to sniff around. He had no interest in the grain of contention. He was confident that he could find his own food that was not under questionable ownership. He thought he saw a small bug under a leaf by the fallen branch. He was not much of a bug eater, but he would often eat some of the food the bugs would eat. So he decided to follow the bug for his dinner. It was then he saw the eyes boring into him. At first, the mouse felt his heart race. Then he calmed down after a short while. He realized that it was just Sparky.

Sparky was a cat that loved mice; but not in the way other cats loved mice. Sparky would play with them. He was separated from his mother, Torch, at an early age. Torch was evacuated from the farm under dubious circumstances. Sir Ector's son, Kay, loved Sparky. It was because of the compassion of Kay that Sparky survived the feline downsizing.

By and large, Sparky was a good cat. He kept away from the chickens and he stayed away from Sir Ector's feet. He would even come when Kay or Art would call him. His only major problem was his relationship with the mice. He did not seem to know that he was not supposed to be enemies with mice. In some ways, he did not seem to realize that he was a cat, or at least he did not know what a cat was supposed to do. However, over time, Kay tried to teach young Sparky how to be a cat. He tried to teach it how to chase things. Art tried to show him, too, but he was so small that he had difficulty keeping up with Kay. Eventually, Sparky caught on.

The field mouse looked up and saw Sparky looking right at him. He knew that Sparky would often come to the field to play. He tried not to take too much notice of the cat. After all, he was looking for some lunch. The cat noticed the mouse alright. It was like someone lit a fire in his brain. He finally caught on to what a cat was supposed to do. Before him was a mouse and it was his for the taking. He took what was his.

Later in his life, Arthur would refer to his time growing up at Ector's estate as "the beautiful summer that would never end." Legend would later state that Arthur's home life was unpleasant at Ector's house and that he was horribly treated. That was a lie; the truth was that he was treated as a son. Now Kay did pick on Arthur on occasion, but that was because he thought he really was his little brother.

The years after the death of Uther Pendragon were fairly quiet for the British and Welch people. There were some lords who wanted to claim to be the king of all of the British peoples. Merlin knew in his heart that none of them would serve God or the people well. In a fit of anger, he took Uther's sword, which was later named Excalibur, and thrust it in a large stone just outside of London. He was not sure why he did it. What was more baffling was that the sword did not break, but rather, it embedded in the stone. It did not make sense. It was then that Merlin took another leap of faith. He proclaimed that only a man worthy enough to pull the sword from the stone would be worthy enough to be the high king of all the British people.

He held his breath on more than one occasion as minor kings, lords and knights tried their hands at the sword. And one by one, they all failed. Merlin knew that this would buy him some time. He prayed and prayed that a new king would be found that would be worthy enough to serve both God and the people.

The years passed. Sir Ector grew in prominence and in land. Occasionally Merlin came to visit the family. No one except Sir Ector and Lady Ellen suspected that he was actually coming to visit Arthur. He would come to teach. Kay had little interest in reading and history. His favourite classes were in swordplay, battle strategy and cooking. For some reason, he really took to the culinary arts. Arthur was better at the bow than Kay and better with horses. He rather enjoyed the studies under Merlin. He tried to absorb languages, science, politics and theology. Merlin felt that Arthur's greatest trait was the willingness to be taught. Merlin had stated to Ector that if Arthur remained teachable, then he could accomplish anything.

It was a big day for Kay. His father's squire, Bedwyr was being knighted. Therefore, his father was look-

ing for a new squire. Kay had spent all of his life for this moment. He worked very hard to become a squire. They would assist the knights in putting on their armour, to keep up the weapons and to generally help as needed. Some squires were life-long squires, some were squires so they could train to be a knight. Others were given the title squire to distinguish them from commoners. The late Rystock was a squire in title only. Arthur was interested in being a squire as well, but he knew that he was too young to be a full-fledged squire.

At Sir Bedwyr's knighting, Sir Ector threw a feast. During the feast, he made some announcements. He proclaimed his pride in Bedwyr, who was a loyal servant and an honourable man. He praised the food of the feast and acknowledged how Kay had helped to prepare the pheasants for the meal. He saved his highest praise for the end of the celebration. He announced, as expected, that he had chosen a new squire. His oldest son, Kay, would be his squire and Arthur would be his squire's assistant.

Over the next few years, Kay took his squire job very seriously. Sir Ector worked with both of his sons and perfected their skills as warriors and as leaders. Merlin would also come and tutor the boys academically and spiritually. They grew to be young men that any father would be proud to call his own.

The day was approaching when Kay was becoming a man and was going to show his knightly skill at tournament. This was a civilized way to show your skill as a warrior without killing someone. The other way to be knighted would be to show your skill in battle. Luckily, things were quiet in merry old England. At least it was quiet for the moment.

They were making their way for Ilford, to stay with some distant relatives while they prepared for the tournament in London. They took great care to pack all of Kay's gear, as well as Sir Ector's possessions. He would be participating in the tournament, but he hinted that he would be shying away from many of the aggressive events, since he was older and did not have anything to prove and less to gain by participating.

They arrived at the manor of Lord Everett in just a week. The estate was much more formal than what they were used to in Dyfed. If they had to stay around with their stuffy relatives all of the time, Kay and Arthur might not have been able to endure. However, they were there to participate in the tournament. Kay was 18 and was viewed by many to be a man. He still had some growing to do, but it was more social than physical. Arthur was just 14. Although his height was impressive for his age, he had a long way to go to fill out his frame. However he did have pretty good coordination for being so gangly.

They found themselves in quite a rush as they prepared for Kay's debut at the tournament. They packed lightly. Many knights were staying in London for the whole tournament and brought ample supplies. Kay and Arthur just brought enough of what they thought they needed each day. That meant one suit of armour, one sword, 2 lances, 3 spears and the like. On the first day of the tournament, Kay did not fare very well, we went up against a Scottish prince who had much more experience than him. The judges were kind to Kay, but he did not win the match. The next day, he was facing a Cornish man who was older than his father. Kay knew that this man had better skill than him, but he was not nearly as strong as Kay. He had to use that to his advantage. He practiced very hard with his sword, when he became aware of a great flaw. His sword was damaged by the Scotsman. He began to panic.

Arthur told him not to worry; he simply stated that he could go back to Lord Everett's in Ilford to get another sword.

"There is no time for you to go to Ilford, Art" whined Kay. "You would not get back in time."

Arthur sheepishly offered "Could you use that sword and favour the other side?"

Kay laughed and said, "I wish it were that easy. As soon as he sees the flaw, he will find a way to break my sword. I do not want to forfeit. Having my sword break and not having a spare is more noble than just quitting. I fear that I will not be knighted today, but I can still keep my honour."

Arthur wanted him to have both. It was just then that they received a visitor. Merlin had come to offer encouragement to the young men. Kay had wished that he had a sword to offer instead, but he did appreciate the fact that he traveled so far for their benefit. Arthur took Merlin with him on his quest for a new sword. He knew that he could not buy one from another knight. They could afford it and they could even find a buyer, but if it got out that Arthur had to buy a sword for his knight, that would ruin him as a reputable squire. He

wanted to avoid that. He wondered if they could go into London and buy a sword. As they left the tournament grounds, they found most of the shops nearby were closed for the afternoon. The owners would close shop, because most people were watching the tournament.

Merlin found an older man to ask him where to find a shop, when Arthur became distracted. In the town square, he saw a shining metal object. When he ran to it, he was surprised to see that it was a sword. He wondered if this was some answer to prayer. As he got closer, he noticed that the sword had been thrust into a large stone. He looked at it and gave it a yank, and it did not budge. He knew that he was running out of time to save face as a squire and to secure a knighting for his brother.

He knew that he was no where near strong enough to pull the sword out. Even his massive brother, Kay, would not pull it out. However, he was out of options. It was this sword or no sword. So he prayed. He prayed as hard as he could. He promised God that he would do whatever he asked if he would just give up this sword for his brother. Arthur could faintly hear Merlin screaming “no don’t touch that,” as he gave the sword one last pull.

Time seemed to slow down for Arthur as he felt the stone give up the mighty sword Excalibur. Slowly he pulled it from its rocky sheath and held aloft - the great Excalibur. As time caught up to Arthur, he realised that he was not alone. There was a crowd forming around him. He was frightened, for he gathered that the sword had belonged to somebody. He quickly apologized.

“I only have need of it for this afternoon. I swear that I will return it back in the stone when I am finished.”

Some people fell down before him. He did not know what was going on. Merlin just laughed, “Of course, this all makes sense now.”

It did not make any sense to Arthur. He just looked at Merlin as if he had lost his sanity. Merlin told Arthur the story of the sword and of Uther Pendragon as they made their way back to the tournament. The crowd of people began to follow them back to the grounds. Word of the event had preceded him. He was greeted with cheers and a few boos. Many pledged their allegiance to him as the new king. However, there were a lot of sceptics. It did not help that Arthur was one of these sceptics.

“I am no king. Clearly, people can see that I am just a boy,” proclaimed Arthur.

Merlin offered, “But you are their king; clearly the people have seen you pull the sword from the stone.”

“It is not me that they want” confessed Arthur. “They want a great warrior. I am not old enough nor bold enough to be the king. And in truth, I do not want to be king!”

“That is why you, above all others, would make the ideal king. People who covet power are dangerous,” remarked Merlin. “That sounds familiar. Do you realise that your father said that same thing before he was made king?”

Lord Everett quickly added that “Merlin, you truly have gone mad. When was my kin, Ector, ever proclaimed a king?”

“You are both correct,” added Sir Ector. “I was never a king of any castle save my own home. But the son of King Uther was raised as my own son in my castle. I loved him as my own child who perished the night the prince was born. Merlin, in his mercy and wisdom, hid the boy from the King and blessed us with as fine a son as a man could have.”

There were gasps and murmurings in the crowd. Those who were supportive of the boy were now convinced that Arthur, the son of a great King, should be the new high King of Britain. Others were now more set against Arthur. Uther Pendragon was not a loved man. Arthur inherited a lot of his father’s enemies that day.

The coronation was made very quickly. It was the next day at the greatest church in London. Merlin and the faithful lords knew that they had to have him crowned quickly; otherwise, the doubts would linger on. Arthur had only a short time to enjoy his new title. Very soon, the opposing lords and lesser kings were threatening war.

For the next 15 years, King Arthur fought, and won, 12 major campaigns. He won over, conquered or subdued all of his enemies. He lost dear friends and grew wiser from his pain. The last of the 12 battles, was the

most monumental and the most bloody of them all. Details of the battle are too grim to report here, but Arthur did win the day at the battle of Badon Hill. He subdued the Hegerst's Saxon forces and they swore allegiance to the great Pendragon. Peace was secured and the "Kingdom of Summer" was proclaimed.

Chapter Four Lesson – The New King from Humble Roots

What a difference between Arthur and his father Uther. And yet, in many ways he was very much like his father. Neither desired to be king. Both had talents and abilities. Both had opportunities.

What made the difference? What made one man despised and the other one proclaimed as the greatest king in British history? The same parallels are seen in the lives of Israel's first two kings. Let's look at the differences between Saul and David. Our next section of scripture is taken from the 16th chapter of 1 Samuel.

The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king." 1 Samuel 16:1

Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these." So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?"

"There is still the youngest," Jesse answered, "but he is tending the sheep."

Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives."

So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one."

So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah. 1 Samuel 16:10-13.

In 1 Samuel, we saw that God's anointing or blessing on Saul had diminished. He was rejected by God to be the king. So God found a new king for Israel. I should note that this is one area where our two stories greatly differ. Saul was still very much in control when David was anointed by Samuel to be the next king.

Where was David when Samuel found him? He was tending sheep. Saul was a big man in a small tribe. David was a small man in a big tribe. He was the youngest of his brothers and he was still a kid when he was called to be God's anointed one.

It was some time before David was officially King of Israel. He would endure victories (such as Goliath) and defeats (such as Saul trying to kill him). But David prepared himself to be a king by being first a good servant. As long as he depended on God, he was successful and the people were blessed.

When I started this devotion, I mentioned about the blessing of God being passed from person to person. There are plenty of blessings to go around. However, I also mentioned that when we are reluctant to serve God, then we will find someone else to serve instead. I believe that God wants us to serve him. If we do serve him, then we will be greatly blessed. We will also be a blessing. However, if we choose to do things our way, the blessing will pass to another. In the end, people will be blessed. But it is up to us if we want to be a part of it or not.

When have you substituted for someone else?

How does it feel to fill someone else's shoes?

Do you feel that your age limits what you are able to do for God?

What can you do now to prepare yourself for a life of serving God?

What are some ways that you think God can work in your life right now?

What are some ways that you think God will work in your life in the future?

What are you doing now to be ready for your future?

Epilogue Devotion – The Round Table of Camelot

There were no more mice in the field. That was because there was no field left. After the years of war, Sir Ector's crops were burned and destroyed. He decided to clear a field elsewhere and use the scorched land for something more useful. The old field became a field for the dead as Sir Ector put in a small cemetery and chapel honouring the dead. Unfortunately, there were plenty of new occupants.

As he cleared out the thinning forest across the creek, he realized something about the new field. He had better get a cat to keep the mice out. He knew that he had to train it the right way and that it had to be supervised. If he was going to grow crops again, he knew that he would have to start off the right way.

Sir Ector's title changed to Lord Ector in due time. He was content with staying on his lands and being blessed by the new field, which was relatively mouse free for the rest of his days. He left the world of governing to his foster son, Arthur. Sir Kay became one of Arthur's greatest knights and resided with him at Arthur's great castle Camelot (where he also watched over the kitchens).

It was there that Arthur built a great hall for his knights. There was a large table for all of his knights to sit with the king and rule and judge over the important matters. It was said that while Arthur was at the round table, that he considered all of his knights to be equal to him. It was there that he ruled with justice for all of the British people. It was a hallmark time for the land and there was a peace that lasted decades.

Unfortunately, all good stories must come to an end. So, too did the dream of Camelot become a nightmare. His half sister, Morgana, would plot against him from Lyonesse. There would be a darkness and plague that covered the land. The worst of all was when it was rumoured that his greatest knight, Sir Lancelot, had betrayed his trust by being involved with his wife.

Arthur lived a life of greatness and glory. He also knew more pain and grief than a dozen men. In both the times of glory and of disaster, Arthur remained true to his promise to serve both God and his people.

Epilogue Lesson – The Reign of King David

Happy endings. We all enjoy them. However, if you research the Arthur legends, you will find a lot of times of struggle. There was betrayal, the blessings were removed, Arthur was wounded and he needed to be restored. But in the end, he was restored. In the end, he won the day, but he was wounded. David is known as the king who was a man after God's own heart. And yet, he too experienced betrayal, being wounded and needing to be restored.

All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.' "

When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a compact with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.

David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years. 2 Samuel 5:1-5

And David became famous after he returned from striking down eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

He put garrisons throughout Edom, and all the Edomites became subject to David. The LORD gave David victory wherever he went.

David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people. 2 Samuel 8:13-15.

Even though David would fall flat on his face. He would also get back up. The most famous of his failings involved an affair with another man's wife, Bathsheba. He even arranged to have her husband slain in battle to cover up for it. But, he also repented. His son would turn against him, but he would rely on God to

