



Prayer Resources

Online Articles

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Prayer Resources

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The Prototype Of An Itinerant Ministry

And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

1 Samuel 7:15-17

A few months back as we were preparing the articles on how to pray for and with your children for **The Threefold Cord**, we stumbled across the profound description of Samuel's itinerant ministry in Israel found in 1 Samuel 7:15-17. At that very time we were beseeching the Lord in all earnestness about the future of Prayer Resources. Seeing the principles imbedded in Samuel's itinerant work was a direct answer to our prayers. We are beginning to recognize Samuel's ministry among the people of Israel as a prototype for all itinerant ministries.

Samuel's itinerant ministry was a lifelong ministry (*all the days of his life*). Samuel's ministry is unique in all of the Bible. He is considered to be the last of the great judges and the first of the great prophets. He was pivotal in the history of Israel in the dramatic shift from God speaking through a judge to God speaking through a prophet. His childhood sensitivity to the voice of God was clear. According to 1 Samuel 3:20, all Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. His ministry as a prophet was not a temporary call upon his life, it was for all the days of his life.

Samuel's itinerant ministry was a mobile ministry (*he went*). God's ministers in both the Old Testament and the New Testament can be classified into two categories: localized ministers represented by priests, Levites, pastors, elders, and deacons and mobilized ministers represented by apostles (sometimes called missionaries or church planters), evangelists, and prophets (sometimes called reformers or revivalists). Samuel's ministry as a prophet required him to travel. The people did not travel from all over the country to come to him. He went to them.

Samuel's itinerant ministry was a confirming and corrective ministry (*and judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel*). Samuel's ministry was to judge Israel. The Hebrew word translated "to judge" means to determine right from wrong. As Samuel traveled to different locations, he would discern the needs, give leadership to that which was right among the people, and correct that which was wrong. Leonard Ravenhill, one of America's leading 20th century revivalists, described the work of a revivalist as one who sets into line that which is out of line. God gives those called to this ministry an unusual discernment into people and events and a clear understanding of His Word to determine how to set things right.

Samuel's itinerant ministry was an annually recurrent ministry (*he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh...And his return was to Ramah*). The Scriptures list four distinct locations where Samuel had annual repeated ministry. While he minis-

tered in many other cities, in these four places he had an ongoing ministry. Built into the lives of the inhabitants of these four cities was the discipline of accountability before one who would discern right from wrong. This anticipation did not allow for any slacking off of righteous living and spiritual practices.

Samuel's itinerant ministry was a home-based ministry (*for there was his house*). It is interesting to note that Samuel did not base his ministry in Shiloh where he was trained by Eli from an early age. His base was where his parents had lived and where his house was located. No doubt, it was there in Ramah where people knew him and the wonderful heritage of his praying mother best. They were the ones most motivated and best able to lend support to his work.

Samuel's itinerant ministry was a spiritually maturing ministry (*and there he built an altar unto the LORD*). Samuel's time at home in Ramah was of great significance to his ministry. It was in Ramah that he spent time with the Lord. It was there that he gained personal cleansing, refreshing, and new guidance for those to whom he ministered. Yesterday's anointing was not sufficient for repeated ministry among God's people. It was absolutely necessary for Samuel to be

spiritually maturing himself in order to be equipped to minister to others.

As we began to study and pray through these choice elements in Samuel's itinerant ministry, we quickly realized that one significant element was missing in the structure of Prayer Resources. Although some of our work has been return visits to places of past ministry, we have not had specific churches where we have ministered in circuit from year to year. The example of Samuel's ministry has caused us to realize the great loss we have suffered these past years by not having this particular aspect to our work.

July 1st marks the beginning of the seventeenth year of Prayer Resources! One of our expressions of celebrating this anniversary is to design the format for enlisting four circuit churches into the ministry! We will visit these four churches at least annually and work closely with each pastor and church leaders to give emphasis in their church to prayer and revival. This new avenue of ministry will only enrich, not replace, our current ministry. Please pray with us for the Lord's direction to the specific churches He has already prepared for this purpose! Pray that He will confirm at least two of these churches this year.