

# THE HERALD

Newsletter of the Orrville Grace Brethren Church

## The Soul Mate Fantasy

By David Beasley

I don't believe that society's definition of "soul mate" is healthy or spiritual. It's great for the movies and Hallmark cards, but no one's marriage is like the romantic movies you've seen.

A good friend of ours is divorcing her husband because she bought into the lie that God wants us to "be happy" in marriage and that He would bless the idea that her happiness would be found when she was freed from her current spouse to find her one, true "soul mate." Like most other people, she has this fantastical, unreal notion that God brings together two lost hearts who experience true compatibility in all the deepest longings of their being. Most people think that your soul mate is someone with whom you never argue and spend endless days of hand-clinching romantic walks on the beach. No hardships, no struggles, just starry-eyed wonder for the next 80 years.

The truth is, a soul mate isn't someone you find, it's someone you intentionally and prayerfully *become*.

Anyone in a successful marriage can tell you that "success" in marriage doesn't come from finding that one person you were meant to be with. It only comes from giving up the selfish be-

havior that served you while you were single, and focusing on selflessly serving your spouse instead.

A happy marriage requires a completely different mindset than the 50/50 concept most couples enter into marriage with. The idea that "If I do my 50 percent and Sabrina does her 50 percent, we will have a happy marriage" is ridiculous. Sabrina and I are both imperfect people and we both make mistakes on a daily basis. One of us will always feel disgruntled, thinking that we are contributing more to the happiness of the relationship than the other.

The only way to have a happy marriage is if I take the selfish focus off of myself and put 100 percent of my energy into serving Sabrina and she does the same with me. If I am focused 100 percent on serving Sabrina, I don't even realize when my needs and desires aren't being met, because I'm not focused on my needs and desires, but hers.

Nowhere in the Bible does God say anything about soul mates. God gives us the simple details on how to have a great marriage: Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Wives, respect your husbands. Both of these are intentional acts of selfless sacrifice that will guarantee us to have a happy marriage.

Even better than that, God chose marriage to represent Christ's love for us. Even though we didn't deserve it, Christ loved us so much that He sacrificed Himself to die for us. Neither Sabrina nor I are perfect, but God has called us to live out the gospel every day by sacrificing for and loving

each other, even though we don't deserve it.

The fact is, if Sabrina showed her love for me only when I did something to deserve it, I would be in big trouble. But Sabrina and I are very much in love. We have a great marriage. But nobody sees us 24/7/365. They only see our public face, not the thousands of times I've thrown a selfish temper tantrum because I didn't feel like her world was revolving around me enough.

Sabrina and I have a very real marriage. We disagree, we argue, and we get frustrated with each other. But even in those times, we work even harder at treating each other with love and respect. Despite what eHarmony would have you to believe, we are not compatible in every way. There are many times when we have to make changes and personal sacrifices for each other. We're in love and are soul mates because we work at it.

Most people don't like the idea of having to work for a soul mate. But you will never speak with a happily married couple that will tell you that they haven't had to work hard for the happiness they have together.

## SUMMARY OF KING SAUL OF ISRAEL FOR US Romans 15:4

The Lord said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in relation to all that they say to you. For it is not you they have rejected, but Me they have rejected from reigning over them... Now then, obey their voice. Only you will testify against them and proclaim to them the judgment concerning the king who will reign over them." – 1 Samuel 8:7, 9

Next, Samuel delivers a famous warning to the Israelite people (1 Sam 8:11-22); he then anoints Saul as the first king of Israel (1 Sam 9), giving the Israelites what they desired. Saul was not a great king, and he became a spiritually poor man. He became deeply flawed, and the entire first half of

Samuel is dedicated to a character study about his rise to kingship, his victories and his failures. When reading through Samuel, you might have a tendency to become critical or judgmental of Saul at times; you'll probably feel sorry for him at times too. But slow down, and be honest with yourself. If you're open-minded, you'll realize you likely have more in common with Saul than you'd care to admit. The whole point of exploring Saul's failures is to warn us, so we don't repeat his mistakes. First Samuel offers up a number of vignettes, some seemingly small, some big, that examine the missteps and sins committed by Saul (see 1 Sam 13-15).

You might wonder if God, being overly hard on Saul, is just an intentional creation of sympathy by the narrator. Well, yes. He wants us to feel sorry for him, so that we begin to see ourselves in him and learn our lesson through him. In essence, Saul's root character flaw becomes self-exaltation and self-deception. Over a period of years, he eventually comes to think that he knows better than everyone else, including God. The biggest tragedy is that he's not even aware of it. The story shows he is completely blind to his arrogance and always believes he's in the right. This spiritual darkness has set in on Saul as the years progressed and he refused to truly repent.

As the historical account of Saul progresses, the mistakes get bigger and the stakes get higher. Somehow, he is never truly able to own what wrong he has done when it's pointed out to him. For example, in 1 Samuel 13, he was told to wait for Samuel before offering sacrifices to God and initiating a battle with the Philistines. He didn't listen, however, and he bulldozed ahead impatiently. Even though he eventually wins the battle, he did it on his own terms instead of God's; a point that he seems to never grasp. His self-ignorance is even greater in 1 Samuel 15, where God commands Saul to go and fight against the Amalekites (this nation tried to wipe out the Israelites long ago when they had just escaped Egypt, see Ex 17:8-15; Deut. 25:17-19). He was given clear instructions to thoroughly defeat the Amalekites. However, he stopped short and allowed the soldiers to plunder the spoil,

even though he was explicitly told to not let this happen. When Samuel confronts him, Saul somewhat confesses, but with a spin: “The people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to make a sacrifice to Yahweh” (1 Sam 15:15). He justifies his stubbornness as a form of obedience, but he can’t see that’s what he’s doing. Samuel then calls Saul to account: “Why then did you not listen to the voice of the Lord? And why did you rush upon the spoil and do evil in the sight of the Lord?” (1 Sam 15:19).

Saul is still unable to see his mistake: “I did listen to the voice of Yahweh, and went on the mission he sent me... but the people took the spoil” (1 Sam 15:21). Now he’s blame-shifting to get Samuel off his back. At this point, Samuel has had enough: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings as much as obeying His voice? To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam 15:22). It’s only at this point that Saul can see his error, and so he owns his behavior with a confession: “I have sinned. For I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and your words, because I feared the people, and listened to their voice.” (1 Sam 15:24).

Now, it’s really hard to tell how genuine Saul’s repentance might be. He’s slippery, and has a habit of saying whatever he needs to say in order to get out of trouble. In just a few moments, he reveals one of his motivations for this show of supposed repentance: “I have sinned, but please honor me before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn back with me, that I may worship the Lord your God.” (1 Sam 15:30).

Saul’s failures are close to home, if we’re willing to let this biblical, historical account shine a spotlight onto our own hearts and minds. Look inside your heart. Saul valued the opinion of the people over God’s wisdom. He feared people, when he should have feared God. Moreover, he continued to worry about one thing in light of correction—his own reputation and honor. Saul is perpetually downplaying his role in the bad decisions he makes. He keeps bringing in other people as if they are responsible for his mistakes.

The remainder of 1 Samuel recounts Saul’s further slide into moral and spiritual decay. His de-

scent provides a strong contrast with David’s rise to a role of influence. At the end of the day, Saul placed his real trust in himself, his plan, and other’s opinions of him. When convicted of this sin, his response is less than admirable. He never actually changes, and he perpetuates these behaviors until the end as he continues down a self-centered and prideful path. Contrast this with David, who is characterized in 1 Samuel as radically obedient and trusting of the Lord, which eventually leads to his rise as king and solidifies his lineage.

These two characters provide us an opportunity for self-reflection so that we might find the blind-spots where our pride may be getting the best of us. We justify our poor decisions and try to negotiate with God; we let our cultural river sweep us away. All of this forces the reader to ponder if we are more similar to Saul than different. In what ways do we elevate the opinions of other people above the wisdom and love of God? In what ways do we blame-shift in order to avoid truly owning our failures?

Saul’s demise is a powerful lesson, but as with all truly tragic accounts, it serves a redemptive purpose. It’s a warning for us, so we don’t repeat his mistakes. Our deepest character flaws don’t have to define us or be the end of the story, not when it comes to the God revealed in Jesus. Unlike Saul, Jesus was and is a king who never failed, but took upon Himself the consequences of the failures and sins of others. Unlike Saul, Jesus never flinched when faced with the dark side of humanity. Rather, He ran directly into it with His love and passion because He knew that God’s power and grace could overcome our evil and create something new. What Saul needed, and what we really need, is a new heart and mind that doesn’t need to defend itself or justify failure and selfishness. What we need is what David later prays for after his greatest blunder: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a spirit of integrity in me.” (Ps 51:10).

*This is partially based on a blog article by Tim Mackie & Aeron Sullivan of “The Bible Project” from 2017. However, Pastor Ike made a number of revisions and edited it. This article is not an endorsement of “The Bible Project” as the authors and creators make a number of theological errors so if you watch their material, please do so with discernment.*

# FUNNIES

Henry and Mony, two brothers, went together to an employment agency looking for work. The first brother was called for an interview. "It says here you're a pilot," said the employment counselor. Henry nodded. "Well that's great. There's a need for experienced pilots. I have a job for you immediately." With that, Henry left for the airfield.

Mony's interview didn't go well. When asked about his work experience, he replied, "I'm a tree cutter." The counselor said there were no opening for tree cutters. Incensed, Mony demanded, "How come you have a job for my brother and not for me?"

"Because your brother is a pilot," explained the counselor. "He has specialized skill."

"What do you mean specialized? I cut wood and he piles it!"

-----  
Patient: "Doctor, my right foot is killing me."

Doctor: "Oh, I imagine it's just from old age."

Patient: "Old age? But doctor, by left foot is just as old. How come it doesn't hurt?"

-----  
A stranger entered the building and asked a boy standing in the lobby, "Can you tell me where Mr. Smith lives?"

The lad smiled and said pleasantly, "Yes, sir. I'll show you."

Six flights up, the boy pointed out a room as that belonging to Mr. Smith. The man pounded on the door repeatedly and after no response commented, "He doesn't seem to be here."

"Oh, no sir," replied the boy. "Mr. Smith was downstairs waiting in the lobby."

-----  
For weeks a six-year-old lad kept telling his first-grade teacher about the baby brother or sister that was expected at his house.

One day the mother allowed the boy to feel the movements of the unborn child. The six-year old was obviously impressed, but made no comment. Furthermore, he stopped telling his teacher about the impending event.

The teacher finally sat the boy on her lap and said, "Tommy, whatever has become of that baby brother or sister you were expecting at home?"

Tommy burst into tears and confessed, "I think Mummy ate it!"

-----  
"Mom, are bugs good to eat?" asked the boy. "Let's not talk about such things at the dinner table, son," his mother replied. After dinner the mother inquired, "Now, baby, what did you want to ask me?" "Oh, nothing," the boy said. "There was a bug in your soup, but now it's gone."