

It's Not About the Donkeys



Have you ever had a "chance encounter" with someone, and when you walked away you knew that God was doing something so much bigger--even if you didn't fully understand what it was, you recognized the encounter as not a chance encounter, but a divine encounter? Maybe it was from seeing this in my own life recently that when I read I Samuel 9-10, I could see it in Saul's life. In those two chapters, the donkeys are mentioned four different times--but the whole story, the BIG PICTURE story, is that God is about to anoint the first KING of Israel!

Saul and his servant leave home one day thinking they are supposed to **find lost donkeys**. Unbeknownst to them, they are supposed to go to Samuel's house. They look for three days: no donkeys. I wonder if God had sent an angel to lead those donkeys around, or hide them away somewhere--or if he just let them be their little donkey selves and enjoy their little spree of freedom?!

Not wanting to return home empty-handed, Saul's servant suggests the last option: asking the man of God--Samuel. When they ask where Samuel is, the woman says, "The people will not begin eating until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward, **those who are invited** will eat." Little does Saul know at that moment that not only has he been invited, but he is the guest of honor! When Saul first approaches Samuel to ask him where the seer's house is, Samuel says, "Today you are to eat with me, and in the morning I will tell you all that is in your heart. **As for the donkeys** you lost three days ago, do not worry about them; they have been found." From Saul's perspective, his whole "reason" for being there had been answered in the first couple minutes--but Samuel had a whole feast with Saul as the guest of honor, a talk time on the roof of his house, and private anointing the next morning already planned according to God's instructions.

After Samuel anoints Saul, he says that the first sign verifying that these events were from God would be that two men would meet him and say, "**The donkeys** you set out to look for have been found." After all the signs were fulfilled that day, and Saul finally gets back home, his uncle asks him, "Where have you been?!" Saul replies, "Looking for the donkeys. But when we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel." Saul's uncle said, "Tell me what Samuel said to you." After all the amazing and exciting things God had done, do you know what Saul replied? "He assured us that **the donkeys had been found**." End of story? No. Beginning of story. Because God had divinely directed Saul on a "wild donkey chase" to move His Big Picture plan into motion.

When I encounter people in unexpected places or at unexpected times, may I remember that God is doing something bigger behind the scenes--it's not about the donkeys!