

Israel's First King

Bible Passage: 1 Samuel 8-15

Memory Verse: ⁶No one is like you, LORD; you are great, and your name is mighty in power. **Jeremiah 10:6**

Bottom Line: I trust Jesus and follow Him because He never fails us.

Big Picture Question: Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything.

Christ Connection: *God intended for a heavenly king to rule over Israel, but the Israelites did not trust God's plan and wanted a king like the nations around them. God gave them a king, but Saul did not obey God. God had a plan to send His Son, Jesus. King Jesus trusted and obeyed God perfectly and died so sinners could be forgiven and accepted.*

Leader Notes:

CONTEXT

Today's Bible story picks up more than 20 years after the Philistines returned the ark of God to the Israelites. During that time, Israel began to seek God again, and Samuel led them to remove their foreign gods and worship God only.

Samuel had judged Israel throughout his lifetime, but he was getting old. So Samuel made his sons, Joel and Abijah, judges over Israel. But like many sons before them, Joel and Abijah did not follow the example of their father. They disobeyed God and caused problems for Israel. The elders of Israel spoke to Samuel about his sons and demanded a king. All the other nations around them had kings, they pointed out. Samuel knew their desire to imitate the nations around them was sinful, and he prayed to God.

"Give them what they want," God said. "They have not rejected you; they have rejected Me as their King." Samuel explained to the Israelites what rights a king would have over them; he warned them that when they regretted asking for a king—and they would regret it—God would not help them.

The people insisted on having a king, so God chose a man named Saul to be the king. By all appearances, Saul was a good king. He was handsome, taller than most people, and God had blessed him. But Saul failed to obey God. First, Saul sinned by burning offerings in Samuel's absence. Later, when the Israelites defeated the Amalekites, Saul did not follow God's instructions for destroying everything. The Lord regretted making Saul king.

As you teach, guide the kids to understand that Saul was not the king the people needed. All earthly kings are imperfect. But we can see how those kings point us to the perfect King, Jesus, who followed His Father's instructions without fail. Thank God for sending us the King we needed—a King who loved us enough to give His life for our salvation.

TEACHING FOCUS (1 Samuel 8-15)

Samuel was a judge over Israel. At this time, Israel had no king, but the leaders of Israel said, "We want a king like the nations around us!" Samuel wasn't sure how to respond, so he prayed to God. God said, "Give them what they want, but warn them what it will be like to have an earthly king."

A king could make their sons serve in the army, he could make their daughters work for him, or he could take away their fields and servants. But the Israelites didn't care. "Give us a king!" they said.

God brought to Samuel a man named Saul. "You will be king!" Samuel said. Saul was surprised; he was from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel. **Samuel anointed Saul, and the Spirit of God was with Saul.**

When the time came for Samuel to introduce the Israelites to their new king, no one could find Saul. God said, "There he is, hidden among the supplies." The people ran to Saul. "Long live the king!" they said. The Israelites thought Saul would be a good king, but Saul did not obey God. One day, Saul took an army to fight the Philistines. But the Philistines had more chariots, more horses, and more soldiers. Saul wanted to ask God for help. Maybe if he made an offering to God, they would win the battle.

There was one problem: only the priests, like Samuel, were allowed to give offerings to God. Saul waited, but Samuel did not come. Saul's soldiers started to leave, so Saul decided to make an offering to God himself. Then Samuel arrived. "You have disobeyed God," Samuel said. "You will not be king much longer. God is going to find someone obedient to be king."

Sometime later, the Israelites won a battle against the Amalekites (uh MAL uh kights). God wanted Saul to destroy everything, but Saul only destroyed things he didn't want. God told Samuel, "I regret that I made Saul king because he does not obey Me." Samuel confronted Saul. "I did obey God!" Saul argued. "I only saved the best animals to sacrifice to the Lord." Samuel asked, "Does God care more about obedience or sacrifices? You rejected His instruction, so God has rejected you as king." Saul admitted his sin and asked for forgiveness. Samuel said, "God has taken away your kingship today, and He will make someone else king."

Christ Connection: God intended for a heavenly king to rule over Israel, but the Israelites did not trust God's plan and wanted a king like the nations around them. God gave them a king, but Saul did not obey God. God had a plan to send His Son, Jesus. King Jesus trusted and obeyed God perfectly and died so sinners could be forgiven and accepted.

TODAY'S TAKEAWAYS

- God will always be greater and more impressive than anything or anyone in life.
- The people could have followed God only, but they wanted a king.
- This king would fail the people so God sent us King Jesus who never fails us.
- **BL:** I trust Jesus and follow Him because He never fails us.

Worship and Story Time

Gather children on a rug or in a specific area of the classroom to tell the story. Some kids (especially the younger ones) may wander. That's okay. They're still listening and learning!

Play the DVD of All Star Kids worship (choose 1 song for today)

What You Say: "Way to go! You are such amazing singers. Now let's sit down to learn from the Bible Story today."

What You Do: Introduce the Story

"The Israelites wanted a king like the people all around them. God told Samuel, "The people do not want Me to be their King. Give the people a king." God told Samuel to look for a man named Saul to make him king. Saul was strong and handsome; he looked like a good king! But Saul did not obey God. God told Saul to fight King Agag and destroy everything, but Saul kept the best animals. Samuel ask, "Why did you not obey God?" Saul said, "I did obey! I kept the best things to give to God!" Samuel said, "Does God want gifts or does He want you to obey Him? God does not want you to be king anymore." God was going to choose a new king who loved Him.

PLAY BIBLE STORY VIDEO

Check diapers and serve snack.

Activities

Depending on the size of your group, you may lead each activity two or three times. Not every child may want to participate in the activities. That's okay.

1. The King Says

What You Need: no supplies needed

What You Do:

- Play Simon Says, but instead of Simon say the king.
- Direct kids to do any action you begin with "The king says."
- Kids should ignore any action that does not begin with "The King says".
- Gently correct kids mistakes and allow them to continue to play.
- Let kids take turns being the king.
- Play as time allows.

What You Say " Samuel warned the Israelites a king could make them do whatever, but God's people wanted a king still. Only one king is perfect and will always lead us to do what is right and good. That king is Jesus. King Jesus leads us to obey for God's glory and our good!"

2. Practice signing the Memory Verse

What You Need: Memory Verse Poster

What You Do:

- Show the poster to the kids.
- As you say the words point to them on the poster.
- Create simple hand motions to teach toddlers the memory verse. Sample hand motions include, "No one is like you (shake your head, like saying no), Lord (point to the sky); you are great (sign for "great", both hands up like giving a double high five), and your name is mighty in power (flex your muscles)

What You Say " The Holy Spirit gave Jeremiah exactly the right words to say to God's people. God wanted them to know that God is perfect, and there is nothing and no one who can compare to Him. Only God is all powerful, perfectly holy, and eternally loving."

Pray and Dismiss:

What You Need: coloring page

What You Do:

- Pass out coloring pages for kids to color before parents come to pick them up, or send home to color at home.

What You Say: "Father you are great and powerful. No one can stand before You except by Your grace, mercy and love. You sent Jesus to save us even though we did not deserve salvation. You are good and loving. We worship You. Help us to live for You. Amen."