

GOD'S BIG PLAN

The People's King

1 Samuel 8-15

Supporting Scriptures: 1 Samuel 19-31; 1 Chronicles 10

Lesson Goals:

- To see that God alone deserves to be worshipped.
- To see that God prefers obedience to sacrifice.
- To see that there are consequences for disobedience.

Scripture Memory Obedience is better than sacrifice. 1 Samuel 15:22 (NLT)

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Tell it as a STORY, not as "He said. . . She said" or read. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

The Lesson: Let's review what we have learned so far about God's Big Plan. (Review the previous stories, encouraging more and more students to share.)

Have you ever had something that you begged for until you received it, or maybe you saved for weeks and months until you could finally afford to buy it? When you received it, what happened? You used it all the time, maybe you even took it with you everywhere you went. Maybe you only played with it a little bit and then grew tired of it. Or maybe a friend got a newer and bigger one; then yours didn't seem so special. Do you still have it? Do you still use it? We sometimes get tired of one thing, even if it's great, and we want what someone else has! Let's see how the children of Israel did the same thing.

READ: 1 Samuel 8:4-7 (Remember, hold the Bible, opened, throughout the story.)

God's people, the children of Israel, had moved into the land that God promised. They lived there for many years. God was their leader and he sent men and women to help them, to protect them, and to show them how to follow God. Then one day, the people of Israel came to Samuel, a man of God and said something surprising. They said, "Give us a king to rule over us. We want to be just like everybody else." How sad. The people of Israel *were* different than everyone else. The God of the universe had chosen them, not the people of Jericho, not the Egyptians, not anyone else. And now they wanted someone else to lead them, someone else to fight their battles for them!

Samuel, the man of God, was very sad. He talked to God and God answered him. "Do what they say. It's not you they are rejecting, Samuel. They are rejecting Me as their King. If they want a king, give them a king, but tell them what it will be like." Samuel told the people what God said. "A king will take your sons and put them in the army or out plowing in his fields. He will take your daughters and put them to work making perfume, cooking and baking. He will also take your fields with its seed, your servants and your animals." But the people didn't care. They wanted to be like everyone else. "Give us a king!" they continued.

This new king came from the smallest tribe in Israel, but he was from a very influential and wealthy family. He was very handsome and stood head and shoulders above everyone else. Samuel, the man of God, took a flask, or bottle of oil, and anointed Saul as king, pouring the oil over his head. Samuel presented Saul to the people of Israel. "Long live the king!," they shouted.

Samuel reminded the people that this king was their idea, not God's. "If you and King Saul will follow God, there will be no problems. God will save you. But if you disobey, you and your king will be thrown out." Then, Samuel encouraged the people by reminding them, "God is not going to walk off and leave you just because you choose a king over Him. It's not about who you are, it's about who God is. He is the God who created the world and all that is in it. God wanted you and chose you for His very own. He will be faithful to you even if you are unfaithful to Him."

Saul did exactly what God, through Samuel, had told the people he would do. Saul took their sons and put them into his army. He began with an army of 3,000 men. The time came for King Saul to go against the enemies of Israel. He attacked the Philistines, a group of their enemies, and was to wait for Samuel to offer a sacrifice to God. The king grew tired of waiting and decided to do things his own way. He disobeyed. With obedience, his kingdom could have lasted forever, but just like that, his kingdom began to fall apart and God began looking for King Saul's replacement, all because he didn't obey. When the king finally went back into battle, he went with only 600 men. Even so, God saved Israel by turning the Philistines against each other.

King Saul also went to war against the Amalekites. They had attacked Israel when they were weak and afraid and just coming out of slavery from Egypt. As they went into battle, God promised to punish the Amalekites and asked King Saul to destroy them and keep nothing. When the battle was over, Saul had kept the king along with the good sheep and cows. They destroyed what nobody wanted anyway. When Samuel came to him, Saul said, "God bless you! I did everything God told me to." Samuel replied, "Then what is this sound of sheep bleating?" "Oh," said Saul, "I kept a few things but destroyed everything else, just like God said." But God had said, "Save nothing." By keeping one sheep, Saul would have been disobedient. Samuel shared this with Saul and continued, "God's not so interested in your performances for Him or your gifts on the altar. What God wants from you is obedience." God's verdict of Saul was this; "I am sorry I ever made Saul king. He's turned his back on me and refuses to do what I tell him. Because he has rejected My command, I reject him as king."

Review:

Let's review what you have learned. Who would like to retell the story? (Ask your group if anything was left out or told inaccurately.) Would anyone else like to retell the story?

What can you and I learn from the story of King Saul, today? First, what were the people really doing when they wanted to be like everyone else and have a king? (They were saying "No" to God.) So what are we doing when we choose something over church or prayer time or even reading our Bible? (We are also saying "No" to God.) Going to church, praying and reading our Bibles is very important. But is it enough? Let's keep looking at King Saul's example.

Second, what did God command Saul and his army as they fought the Amalekites? (Not to keep anything from the battle.) So, what did they do? (They kept the king and some sheep and cows. They only got rid of the things no one wanted.) Were they obedient? (No.) But, they had destroyed the Amalekites! (They didn't do exactly as God told them to. They tried to do things their own way.) So, if you and I know what we are supposed to do and we only do part of what we have been asked, is that obedience? (No.)

Third, when Samuel found Saul, he was offering a sacrifice to God for the battle against the Amalekites. Was God pleased with King Saul's offering? (No.) Why not? (Because God wanted Saul to be obedient. God wasn't interested in his gifts if he were going to disobey.) So, is it enough to come to church if we continue disobeying? (No. Church is important, but if we don't obey what we learn how to do there, it is just a performance, like Saul offering God a gift at the altar. We cannot give God enough gifts to make up for our disobedience. Instead, He gave us a gift—His Son, Jesus, who died on the cross for our disobedience. Will you follow Him in obedience, today?)

**Planning for Next Week
Lesson 19 - God's King
1 Samuel 16-17**

PRESCHOOL LESSON

SING: “Jesus Loves Me”

SHARE: What do you do when you’re asked to pick up your toys? Do you always share? If you are like I was, I bet you sometimes leave your toys out and go play with something else. And it sure is hard to share all the time, even when we are told to. Our story today is about a king who didn’t always do what he was supposed to do, either.

The people of Israel asked God for a king. (Form a crown above your head with your hands.) God wanted them to want Him, but He gave them what they asked for. God gave the people and their new king a rule. Obey me and you’ll be around for a long time; disobey me and out you go!

King Saul was very tall and handsome. (Sit up straight and tall.) King Saul liked to fight battles. (Extend your arm as if fencing.) At one of those battles, God said, “Saul, when you go off to fight, don’t bring anything back with you.” So, King Saul and his army fought against the enemy. When they returned, they brought sheep (“Baaaaaa”) and cows (“Mooooo”). And God was very displeased. (Frown.)

God said, “Saul, you disobeyed Me. Because of your disobedience I am already looking for the next king. (Form a crown above your head with your hands.) You will not be king forever. You brought me gifts of sheep (“Baaaaaa”) and cows (“Mooooo”), but you have them because you disobeyed me. What I want from you, more than anything, is for you to obey Me.”

And what God wants from you, more than anything, is for you to obey Him. What are things you can do to obey God?

PRAY: Thank you, God, for loving me, even when I disobey.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Memory Verse Activity - Print the memory verse, word by word, on a "String of Sheep." The string of sheep can be made by folding paper, accordion style, and drawing a sheep on the top portion of paper. Cut sheep out, being sure to leave them attached.
- Saul was head and shoulders taller than everyone else. On a long, banner like strip of paper, measure each of your students height, marking a line and adding their names.
- Remember to continue reviewing the books of the Old Testament, through 1 Samuel. Try playing a memory game.
- Make crowns. Use large sheets of construction paper, cutting points across one long side. Tape to fit individual students' heads.
- Make perfume with your female students.
- Make sword with your male students. Use cardboard or make them with balloons.