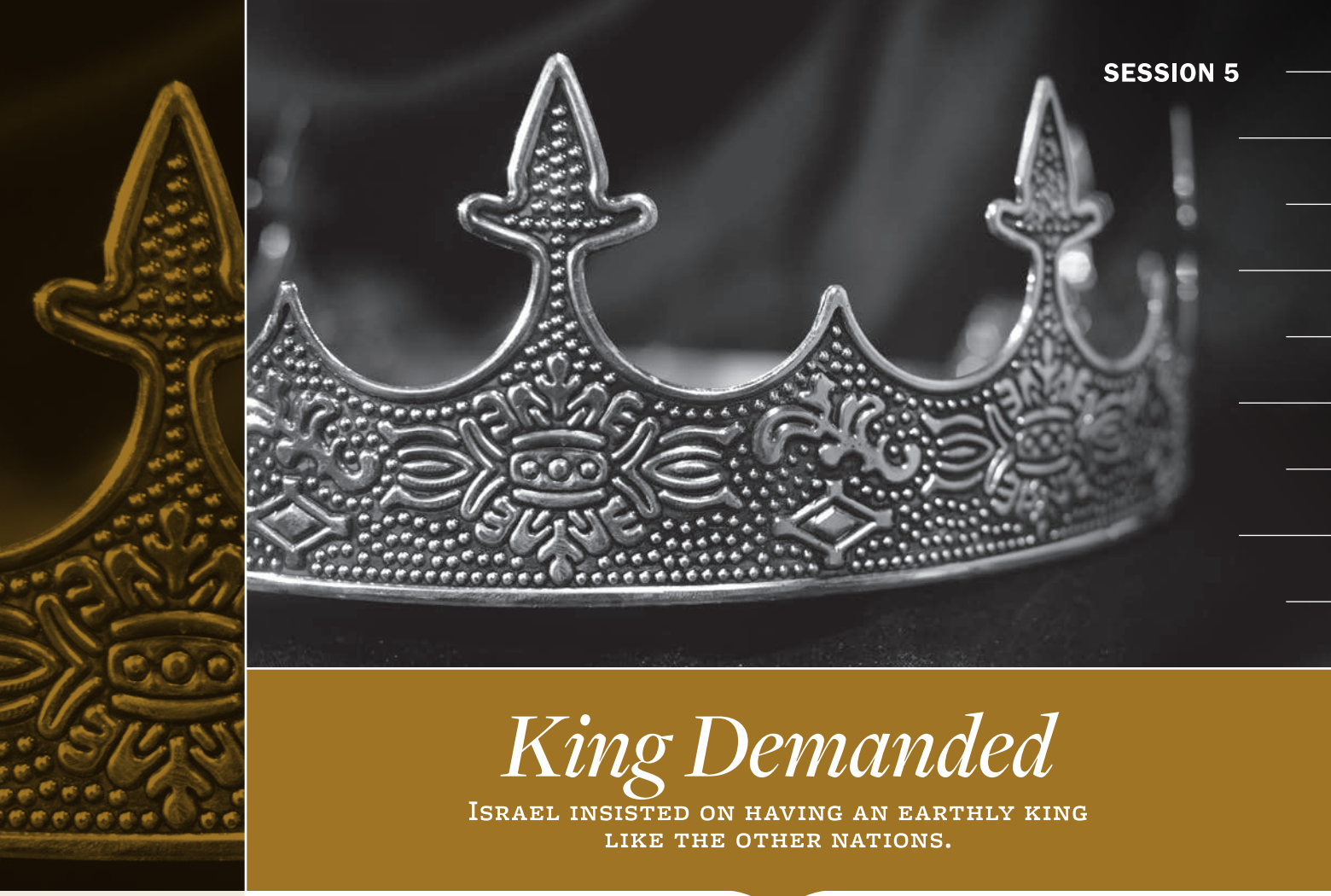


King Demanded

ISRAEL INSISTED ON HAVING AN EARTHLY KING LIKE THE OTHER NATIONS.

Scripture Passage: 1 Samuel 8:1-9,19-22 **Memory Verse: 1 Samuel 8:7**

The saying goes, "Imitation is the highest form of flattery." While this statement may be true, the benefits of imitation can be positive or negative. This is determined by the person or object being imitated. If you imitate someone with great character, the benefit is positive. But if you imitate someone whose very character is tainted with wickedness, the obvious result can be devastating. Imitating the wrong person can significantly damage a person's integrity and trustworthiness.

In today's study, the people of Israel wanted to imitate the nations that surrounded them. This move violated God's commands through the law of Moses and would eventually lead to great harm for His chosen people. As you prepare to teach this session, think about those in your own life who have served as positive models and have provided examples worth imitating. Thank God for those people and ask Him to help you become a solid example of godly living. Pray that God uses this session to challenge your group members to choose their role models wisely.

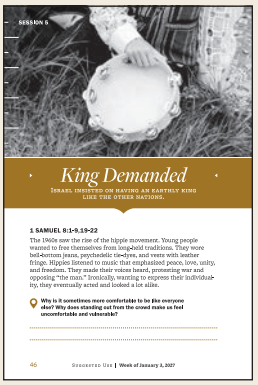
Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

Scan here to gain insights about this week's study on Apple podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, or at goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training.

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The 1960s saw the rise of the hippie movement. Young people wanted to free themselves from long-held traditions. They wore bell-bottom jeans, psychedelic tie-dyes, and vests with leather fringe. Hippies listened to music that emphasized peace, love, unity, and freedom. They made their voices heard, protesting war and opposing "the man." Ironically, wanting to express their individuality, they eventually acted and looked a lot alike. (PSG, p. 46)

Why is it sometimes more comfortable to be like everyone else?
Why does standing out from the crowd make us feel uncomfortable and vulnerable?


SESSION 6

King Demanded

ISRAEL INSISTED ON HAVING AN EARTHLY KING LIKE THE OTHER NATIONS.

1 SAMUEL 8:1-9,19-22

The 1960s saw the rise of the hippie movement. Young people wanted to free themselves from long-held traditions. They wore bell-bottom jeans, psychedelic tie-dyes, and vests with leather fringe. Hippies listened to music that emphasized peace, love, unity, and freedom. They made their voices heard, protesting war and opposing "the man." Ironically, wanting to express their individuality, they eventually acted and looked a lot alike.

Why is it sometimes more comfortable to be like everyone else? Why does standing out from the crowd make us feel uncomfortable and vulnerable?

46 Unscripted Unit | Week of January 3, 2027

Understand the Context (1 Samuel 8:1–11:15)

How tragic when history repeats the same sad tale! Samuel had witnessed the disappointment Eli had experienced through his two wicked sons. In 1 Samuel 8, the biblical narrator repeated the same thought. Samuel's sons were also corrupt.

In Eli's case, his sons served as priests in the tabernacle. Samuel's sons were appointed as judges, leading the people and arbitrating disputes. Unfortunately, their decisions could be bought for a price. Their corruption created a leadership crisis as Samuel aged.

About two decades after the defeat of the Philistines in 1 Samuel 7, a new generation with a new perspective rose in Israel. These Israelites decided they wanted a king to ensure security from their enemies. Since Egypt, God had been their protection, but they wanted someone they could see in flesh and blood.

Three ideas fueled this desire. First, Samuel was nearing the end of his life. Next, his sons were corrupt and untrustworthy. And finally, all the surrounding nations had kings.

This request rejected the unique nature of Israel as a theocracy ruled by God. The Lord had chosen the Israelites to be His special people, and they enjoyed a special relationship with Him. Now, instead of following His direct rule, they longed for a monarchy ruled by a physical king.

In this week's session, we will see the agony with which Samuel received this request and his reluctant adherence to the request. Once God had given him the freedom to accept their demand, Samuel took time to spell out the ramifications of having a king. He warned the people that a monarchy meant conscripted service to the king, furnishing his meals and other needs. It also could lead to the confiscation of land and crops and heavy taxation based on the king's interests. It would come with a tremendous cost, but the people were not deterred. They cried out for a king.

The process of finding a king began with God revealing His plan to Samuel. A man named Saul would approach Samuel looking for divine insight in his search for some missing donkeys. Samuel would anoint Saul as king, and the selection would be validated by a series of events that Samuel predicted.

Later, Samuel called the nation together at Mizpah where Saul was revealed as God's choice. He would validate his kingship through a victory against the Ammonites. With that, the book of 1 Samuel makes a subtle shift in focus from Samuel to Saul. While Saul had numerous good qualities, the one thing he lacked was spiritual depth. This would be seen throughout his reign as king.

Read 1 Samuel 8:1-9,19-22. What motivations for wanting a king are clearly stated in the passage? (PSG, p. 47)

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ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Kingdom of Saul*), and **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Prophets, Priests, Kings*). Make copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in 1 Samuel*). Gather some small sticky notes.



READ: Call on a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 46 of the PSG. Affirm that those who want freedom often end up copying each other.

ASK: **Why is it sometimes more comfortable to be like everyone else? Why does standing out from the crowd make us feel uncomfortable and vulnerable?** (PSG, p. 46)



CONTEXT: Using **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of 1 Samuel*), point out that this session covers a transition away from the rule of judges. Share how the role of judges had developed in Israel across time:

> *Even before His people crossed into Canaan, God had told them to appoint judges when they settled into Israel. . . . Initially, this was how the Israelites functioned politically and culturally. We see this structure in an early scene in Israel's history. In trying to identify who had disobeyed his command not to remove anything from the conquered city of Jericho, Joshua called the people forward and told them to organize by tribes. The selected tribe was to organize by clans, and then the clans by families. From the chosen family, God identified the culprit, Achan (Josh. 7). This presents a snapshot of how the nation was first organized in Canaan. What we see in today's study is the end of this political and cultural structure.* (PSG, p. 47)



TRANSITION: *In today's Bible study, we'll see how the leaders of Israel challenged this form of government and requested something that resembled the neighboring nations. This request ushered in consequences that would last for generations.*

Group Activity Option

Music

Distribute hymnals and lead adults in singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King" (*Baptist Hymnal 2008*, No. 302). Ask: ***Why do we worship Jesus as King? How does recognizing Him as King affect the way we live?*** Note that, in Samuel's day, the people sought an earthly king because they thought that would offer more security and stability.

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The Demand (1 Sam. 8:1-5)

1 When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. 2 His firstborn son's name was Joel and his second was Abijah. They were judges in Beer-sheba. 3 However, his sons did not walk in his ways—they turned toward dishonest profit, took bribes, and perverted justice. 4 So all the elders of Israel gathered together and went to Samuel at Ramah. 5 They said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Therefore, appoint a king to judge us the same as all the other nations have."

(vv. 1-2) First Samuel 7:15-17 affirms that Samuel judged Israel for his entire life, making a yearly circuit through the towns of Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, and his home in Ramah. His duties involved hearing disputes and rendering justice in each case. As such, his duties mirrored those of Moses (Ex. 18:13). While Samuel briefly served as a military leader (1 Sam. 7:5-14), he was not a deliverer like the leaders in the book of Judges were. His role focused more on spiritual leadership.

All great leaders reach a point when they can no longer lead, and Samuel was no exception. So, the aging priest ***appointed his sons as judges over Israel***. In this, he was following the instructions given by God in Deuteronomy 16:18. His hope was that they would continue the strong spiritual guidance that Israel needed.

Along with providing their names—•***Joel*** ("the Lord is God") and •***Abijah*** ("My Father is Lord")—the narrator added that they served in ***Beer-sheba***. This city was located about fifty-seven miles south of Ramah in territory allotted to the tribe of Simeon. This ancient city received its name from Abraham to commemorate his treaty with Abimelech (Gen. 21:22-33).

Key Doctrine

The Family

Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. (See Joshua 24:15; Ephesians 6:4.)

(v. 3) Just like Eli's sons a generation earlier, the sons of Samuel were corrupt. Unlike Eli who was spiritually shallow, Samuel was a godly man who was impeccable in all his ways. In fact, Israel's leaders had no concerns with Samuel (1 Sam. 12:4). For decades, he had guided them with integrity and treated them well. But the same could not be said about his sons. Instead of following their father's example, Joel and Abijah ***turned toward dishonest profit, took bribes, and perverted justice***.

Corruption among leaders was a common theme throughout the Old Testament. The law of Moses repeatedly condemned the abuse of justice and bribery by those who served as judges (for example, see Deut. 16:18-19).

(v. 4) Apparently, the corruption of Joel and Abijah had been a talking point throughout Israel. Finally, a delegation of ***the elders of Israel*** approached Samuel at his home in •***Ramah*** to complain. The presence of such a group might point to the existence of a ruling body that helped govern the nation.

(v. 5) These elders expressed the opinion that Israel's current form of government wasn't working. Samuel was ***old***, and his sons had rejected his ***ways***. So, they proposed appointing a ***king to judge*** the people.

These elders represented the nation, and they understood that the people didn't want to return to the weak leadership model that dominated Israel during the period of the judges. Something better was needed.

But there was something else prompting the plan: The people had an "everybody else is doing it" mentality. They wanted a king that was ***the same as all the other nations***.

Of course, the elders (and the people) had lost sight of the truth that Israel was not supposed to be like other nations. They were chosen by God to be unique. Instead of a king, God Himself had led the Israelites since rescuing them from Egypt. In subsequent verses, Samuel would rightly state that their request for a human king reflected an abandonment of the Lord.

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APPLICATION POINT: Parents can remain diligent in directing their children to follow God.

READ: **Invite a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 8:1-3** while adults listen for what the writer said about Samuel and his sons.

DISCUSS: Direct adults to work in groups of two or three to compare and contrast 1 Samuel 2:12-17 and 1 Samuel 8:1-3. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their insights. Lead a brief discussion on how the example of Eli and his sons might have affected Samuel. Share this information from pages 48-49 of the PSG to supplement the discussion:

> *All was not well in Samuel's life. The difficulty came because of Joel and Abijah. This seems to have been a case of history repeating itself. Eli had been Samuel's mentor. His two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, like their father, served as priests. But rather than demonstrate humility and godliness, they were "wicked men" (2:12). . . . Samuel's sons, likewise, lived sinfully and abused their power. They turned toward dishonest profit (Ex. 18:21), accepted bribes (23:8), and perverted justice (23:2).*

HIGHLIGHT: On **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Kingdom of Saul*), highlight the cities of Beer-sheba and Ramah. Explain that Samuel's sons served as judges in southern Israel (Beer-sheba), while Samuel spent most of his ministry in central Israel (Ramah). Highlight that the distance may have made it more difficult for Samuel to correct and discipline his sons' behavior.



READ: **Direct a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 8:4-5** while adults listen for the leaders' logic in asking for a king.

ASK: **Given the difference between judges and kings, what advantages did the people think having a king would offer?** (PSG, p. 49)

EXPLAIN: Note that the desire to avoid corruption likely played a role, but the desire to be like other nations seems like it was the driving force. Emphasize that the move from a theocracy to a monarchy represented spiritual compromise and served as an abandonment of God and His leadership.

TRANSITION: *The elders' request signaled a significant shift in the cultural, political, and religious fabric of the nation.*

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The Rejection (1 Sam. 8:6-9)

6 When they said, "Give us a king to judge us," Samuel considered their demand wrong, so he prayed to the LORD. 7 But the LORD told him, "Listen to the people and everything they say to you. They have not rejected you; they have rejected me as their king. 8 They are doing the same thing to you that they have done to me, since the day I brought them out of Egypt until this day, abandoning me and worshiping other gods. 9 Listen to them, but solemnly warn them and tell them about the customary rights of the king who will reign over them."

(v. 6) Samuel immediately recognized that the people were turning their back on God again. He ***considered their demand wrong***. Yet, he ***prayed to the LORD*** about the matter. Samuel understood that this request went far deeper than just wanting protection from their enemies. It was a sign of spiritual decline within the nation. The request wasn't a political or military problem. It was a deep-seated spiritual problem.

First Samuel 8–11 form a major transition in the governance of Israel. To this point, the Israelites had lived in a theocracy, where God directed the actions of the nation. While Israel proved to be poor followers of God's leadership, He still provided for their needs and fought their battles. Moses, Joshua, and the various "deliverers" described in Judges—along with Samuel—simply conveyed God's directions to the people.

What the elders described was quite different. Yes, the people would still "worship" God, but they wanted to answer to a human leader. This demand would change Israel's history for centuries to come. Samuel sensed the danger and needed to hear God's take on the situation.

(vv. 7-8) God's response must have startled Samuel initially: ***Listen to the people***. God affirmed what Samuel was thinking. This request was a rejection of God. It represented another example in a long line of rebelling against Him and ***abandoning*** His ways since God had ***brought them out of Egypt***.

Even a cursory reading of the Old Testament reveals this repeated pattern of vows of dedication to the Lord God, followed by abandonment and idolatry, followed by God's hand of oppression on His people, followed by crying out for help, followed by deliverance, followed by more vows of dedication. This is seen in the exodus event, the wilderness years, the period of the judges, and the periods of the united and the divided kingdoms.

This downward spiral would continue until the time of the Babylonian exile. With that exile, the Jewish people finally ended their tendency toward idolatry. From that period onward, they could be considered a monotheistic community, worshiping and serving only one God.

(v. 9) While God directed Samuel to ***listen to*** the people's request, He also made sure they knew the consequences of their choice. He outlined specific instructions for Samuel to ***solemnly warn them*** and to emphasize ***the customary rights of the king***. In agreeing to the elders' demand, God fulfilled what had been declared in the Pentateuch.

For example, God told Abraham that kings would be among his descendants (Gen. 17:6,16). Likewise, Jacob, while pronouncing blessings on his sons, spoke of a king whose scepter would not depart from Judah (Gen. 49:10). And, in his final set of speeches, Moses said that the people would ask for a king one day so they could be like other nations (Deut. 17:14). Moses went on to give the Israelites warnings and instructions for when the king finally took Israel's throne. Now, that day had arrived, so Samuel reminded them how things would be in a monarchy (1 Sam. 8:10-18).

Praying Scripture

1 Samuel 8:7
Spend time praying Scripture using 1 Samuel 8:7. Read the verse, then respond to these questions:

- How does God reveal Himself in this verse?
- How should I respond to what He reveals?

Example: Ask God to reveal any ways you have abandoned Him. Pray for His wisdom and courage to eliminate those issues and to let Him shine as your King each day.

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EXPLORE 1 Samuel 8:6-9

APPLICATION POINT: **Believers should resist the temptation to replace God's plan with their own ideas.**

READ: **Call on a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 8:6-9** while the rest of the group listens for God's response to the people's request.

GUIDE: Highlight that Samuel's first instinct was to pray about the request. Direct the group to work in pairs to summarize and paraphrase the interaction between Samuel and God. Call on volunteers to report.

EXPLAIN: Share why God would allow Israel to have a king.

> *The context clearly shows [God] was instructing Samuel to do as the elders asked. With the imperative came a grave admonishment: solemnly warn them. God's willingness to allow them to go through with their plan shows how seriously He valued man's free will. As He had done in the garden, God allowed people to make the hurtful choice—but with that choice came unavoidable consequences. Indeed, we reap what we sow.* (PSG, p. 51)

ASK: **What makes it so easy for us to pursue our own agenda instead of trusting in God?** (PSG, p. 51)

SHARE: Note that God had spoken about this through Moses in Deuteronomy 17, so this was no surprise to Him. Explain that in verses 10-18, Samuel recounted God's words about what the people could expect from a king, but they still clamored for a human leader.

PRAY: Challenge adults to consider how they might tend to remove God from the throne in their lives. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in 1 Samuel*) and encourage adults to pray 1 Samuel 8:7—this session's memory verse—back to God as noted on page 60 of in the Leader Guide.


PRAYING SCRIPTURE IN 1 SAMUEL

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Daily Planner

Display a daily planner. Lead the group to discuss how a daily planner helps them identify priorities in life. Ask: ***What did Israel's request for a king reveal about their priorities? How do your priorities compare to God's plan for your life?***

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The Result (1 Sam. 8:19-22)

19 The people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We must have a king over us. 20 Then we'll be like all the other nations: our king will judge us, go out before us, and fight our battles." 21 Samuel listened to all the people's words and then repeated them to the LORD. 22 "Listen to them," the LORD told Samuel. "Appoint a king for them." Then Samuel told the men of Israel, "Each of you, go back to your city."

(vv. 19-20) Following God's instruction, Samuel laid out the details of living in a monarchy, including the conscription of people, food stock, animals, and land. The Israelites had mentioned security, but Samuel emphasized what the king would take to sustain a large retinue of administrative and military personnel. Appointing a king didn't just involve picking one person to sit on the nation's throne. It would involve hundreds—perhaps thousands—of other people.

In verses 10-18, Samuel used "take" six times to describe what the king would claim. Samuel painted a realistic picture so the people would think twice about their demand. He even warned them that a day would come when they would cry out to God because of their king, but the Lord would not answer them (v. 18).

Despite Samuel's specific warning, the people ***refused to listen*** to him. Nothing he said would change the elders' minds, which implies the people would have been equally stubborn. The exclamation ***No!*** is a strong negative that often describes something impossible or unnecessary. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the same Hebrew word is used to set prohibitions. One common example of this can be found in the "no" and "not" phrases of the Ten Commandments.

Here, the Israelites basically cast aside any concerns Samuel had raised. Regardless of the price required, ***we must have a king***. They were willing to put up with all that a king would require to fulfill their selfish wish.

The term *listen* sets up a contrast that highlights the people's rebellion. Three different times God had told Samuel to listen to the people (vv. 7,9,22), yet the people *refused* to listen.

In addition, the Israelites became more aggressive as Samuel tried to reason with them. In verse 5, the elders had requested. Here, however, the request became a demand. In fact, the Hebrew wording strongly emphasizes the people's determination in getting what they want.

Again, the heart of the issue was the Israelites' desire to ***be like all the other nations***. From the time the children of Israel left Egypt, the Lord had been the One who rendered judgments on behalf of the people. He was the One who would ***go out before*** them as they navigated through the wilderness. It was God who had fought ***battles*** and conquered enemies for them. The people discounted His faithfulness to them and called for a king to step into His role as provider and protector.

(vv. 21-22) Samuel once again took the words of the elders of Israel to God in prayer. He ***listened*** as the Lord had directed, and He ***repeated*** the people's words. Of course, this was not the first time, nor would it be the last time, that the chosen people of God chose to ignore His direction.

God once again agreed to their demands: ***Appoint a king for them***. How God's heart must have broken as He spoke these words! God allowed them to go their headstrong way with all the consequences that lay ahead. With nothing else to do but wait for God to reveal His choice for king, Samuel dismissed the people.

Bible Skill

Compare and contrast biblical characters. Compare Samuel's description of the customary ways of the king in 1 Samuel 8:11-18 with the narration concerning Solomon's kingdom in 1 Kings 4:21-28. *Was Samuel's assessment of the ways of a king accurate in describing what took place under Solomon? What are some words or phrases you might use to describe the kingdom of Solomon?* Compare the words of Samuel in 1 Samuel 8:18 with the concerns raised by the people of Israel about the reign of Solomon in 1 Kings 12:4. *What lesson can we learn from study regarding the way we treat others?*

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EXPLORE 1 Samuel 8:19-22

APPLICATION POINT: **Believers must be careful about allowing others to fill the roles reserved for God in their lives.**


Prophets, Priests, Kings

OVERVIEW: Summarize the warning Samuel gave in 1 Samuel 8:10-18. Share the information for kings on **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Prophets, Priests, Kings*).

READ: **Read aloud 1 Samuel 8:19-22** while the group listens for the people's response. Allow volunteers to share what they heard.

SHARE: Use information from 1 Samuel 8:19-20 on page 63 of the Leader Guide to explain the force of the people's "No!" Point out that while the people may have known Samuel was right, they probably thought things would be different for their king.

ASK: **Why do we often think that we are going to be the exception to the rule, as in: "That consequence will never happen to me"? How does that reality help you better understand the elders' insistence that Israel should have a king, despite dire warnings?** (PSG, p. 53)

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the twisted logic behind the people's insistence for a human king:

> *[A] misguided conviction was behind their declaration, "We must have a king." They thought that having a king and being like all the other nations would be good. [But] being like all the other nations meant Yahweh would no longer be His people's Ruler, King, and Lawgiver. They would no longer reflect His glory. . . . What the people's request failed to acknowledge was that God had been fighting their battles since their ancestors had been captives in Egypt. Further, He promised He would continue to do that if they would remain faithful to Him.* (PSG, p. 52)

SAY: *God again told Samuel to appoint a king for the people. So, the aging priest told the people to go back home until God had made His choice for the new monarch. Their message had been delivered and received. Now, they had to wait for God to reveal His plan.*

ASK: **Although the people were rejecting God as their King, He would still be the one who would choose the man Samuel was to anoint. What does that say about God's sovereign rule over His people?** (PSG, p. 53)

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CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from Apply the Text on page 54 of the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *Parents can remain diligent in directing their children to follow God.*
- *Believers should resist the temptation to replace God's plan with their own ideas.*
- *Believers must be careful about allowing others to fill the roles reserved for God in their lives.*

REFLECT: Direct adults to spend a few moments reading and reflecting on the first set of questions on page 54 of the PSG. Give each adult a small sticky note and encourage them to jot down changes they may need to make in their lives to align more fully with what God wants for them.

DISCUSS: Allow a few volunteers to suggest ways believers can evaluate whether they are following God's plan for their lives or seeking to replace it with their own ideas.

EVALUATE: Challenge adults to spend time during the week responding to the second set of questions on page 54 of the PSG. Encourage them to identify and confess areas of compromise.

PRAY: Remind adults to use **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in 1 Samuel*) to pray and to work on memorizing this week's memory verse. Close the session with prayer, asking God to provide courage and strength so adults can follow His plan.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send a text or an email to each adult in the group, reminding them to continue reflecting on the questions from page 54 of the PSG. Encourage them to keep their sticky note in a place where they can refer to it during a time of prayer each day. Assure them that you will be praying for each one of them during the week and that you look forward to seeing them during the next session.

ADULT COMMENTARY



Want to go deeper in your study? *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* offers additional information and biblical insights related to the key passages. (Available for purchase at **Lifeway.com**.)

EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

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