

Obedience

Session 6 • 1 Samuel 15:7-23

ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Kingdom of Saul*) and **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Prophets, Priests, Kings*). Prepare copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: 1 Samuel Time Line*).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 53. Allow volunteers to describe times when they tried making a dish without using the recipe.

ASK: Can you think of situations or projects that require following step-by-step instructions? What happens when those steps aren't followed? (p. 53)

IDENTIFY: On **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Kingdom of Saul*) point out the nation of Amalek on the southern border of Israel. Explain who the Amalekites were and what they did to the Israelites. (p. 53)

TRANSITION: *Today's study begins with Saul fulfilling God's plan to destroy the Amalekites. However, the king did not completely obey God—and he faced consequences for his actions.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

RECAP: Use **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Prophets, Priests, Kings*) to summarize the role of kings in ancient Israel, Remind adults that God had chosen Saul as Israel's first king. Point out Saul's anointing around 1050 BC on **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: 1 Samuel Time Line).* Explain that 1 Samuel 15 begins with God telling Saul to destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:3).

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 15:7-11 as adults listen for the actions of Saul and the Israelite troops.

DISCUSS: Guide adults to call out actions Saul and his troops took that were in obedience to God's command. Direct them to identify ways they did not follow God's directions.

ASK: Why did the Lord regret making Saul the king of Israel? (p. 55)

EXPLAIN: Summarize this content to provide insight into God's regret:

- **(15:11)** God expressed "regret" twice in the Old Testament. He used that wording two times in the account of Noah (Gen. 6:6-7), and He used it two times in this chapter to describe Saul's reign as king (vv. 11,35). God's regret was rooted in Saul's rebellion. God told Samuel that Israel's king had "turned away from following me." The leader of God's people had rejected God's instructions.

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ASK: What motivated Saul and the Israelites to get rid of only the worthless and unwanted things? How do you think they justified that choice in their minds? (p. 55)

APPLY: Challenge adults to spend time talking with God this week about areas where they are not following Him completely.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 15:12-15. Direct adults to listen for what Saul had been doing since the victory over Amalek and how he responded to Samuel's visit.

SHARE: Point out that Saul had been on a personal promotion tour after the battle. Highlight his stop in Carmel to raise a monument for himself before heading off to Gilgal, a prominent worship center for the Israelites. Guide adults to imagine and describe how Samuel likely approached Saul.

ASK: What was Saul's immediate response to Samuel's presence? Why did Saul respond to Samuel this way?

ASK: What excuses do people use to justify their disobedience to God? (p. 55)

SAY: *We can never justify ourselves when we refuse to obey God's commands fully. Partial obedience is disobedience.*

APPLY: Encourage adults to examine their lives and to confess any areas of partial disobedience.

READ: Read aloud 1 Samuel 15:16-19. Lead adults to call out words that describe Samuel's emotional state in these verses.

SHARE: Allow a few volunteers to suggest how Samuel felt in a single word. Record their responses on the board. Remind adults that Samuel had been upset as he prayed the night before. Suggest that his frustration and anger continued to grow as he listened to Saul justify his sin.

REVIEW: Talk about how far Saul had fallen since the day Samuel first told him that he would be king.

- **(15:17)** Saul once saw himself as unimportant, showing genuine humility. Some translations render it as "were once small in your own eyes." He demonstrated this when Samuel came to anoint him (1 Sam. 9:21) and even afterward hesitated to lead (10:17-25). Yet God chose and anointed him as king over Israel, raising him from obscurity to lead the twelve tribes. In doing so, God once again exalted the humble.

EXPLAIN: Point out that God had given Saul a specific mission to fulfill, and he had no right to do things his own way. Highlight that God was judging the Amalekites, and He expected Saul to fulfill His plans and purposes. Share that instead of punishing wickedness, Saul ended up committing wickedness—and God was taking the kingdom from him as a result.

ASK: What do these verses teach about the importance of complete obedience? (p. 55)

READ: Call on a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 15:20-23. Guide half the group to listen for Saul's defense of his actions, while the other half listens for Samuel's reply.

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CONTRAST: Guide adults to compare Saul's defense with Samuel's response. Discuss briefly the contrast between Saul's words and attitude with Samuel's response.

EXPLAIN: Highlight the poetic nature of Samuel's words to Saul. Summarize this content to underscore the significance of the imagery used:

- **(15:22-23)** Samuel's answer is presented in Hebrew poetic form using four parallel couplets. First came the premise. Rather than "burnt offerings and sacrifices," God finds pleasure in obedience. Second, obedience trumps "sacrifice," and paying "attention" to God's commands means more than presenting "the fat of rams." The third parallel thought contains God's judgment. In the Mosaic law, "divination" was strongly condemned and was a capital offense (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:27). In this couplet, God equated divination with rebellion and "defiance" with "idolatry." Samuel closed with the final word of judgment from God in verse 23. The Hebrew word *rejected* means to "cast away," "to despise," and "to abhor." Saul had treated God's instructions with total disdain. In response God (using the same Hebrew word) cast Saul away from the throne of Israel.

ASK: Why did God impose such a harsh punishment on Saul? (p. 55)

RECAP: Point out that the result of Saul's disobedience was God's judgment on him, rejecting him as king of Israel. Share that even though Saul confessed his sin, Samuel told him that the Lord was tearing the kingdom away from him (v. 28) and giving it to someone else. Mention that Samuel completed Saul's mission by destroying Agag, the Amalekite king.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- God expects His people to obey His commands completely.
- We must resist the temptation to justify our actions when we disobey God's commands.
- We should demonstrate humility by submitting to God's plans.
- We should focus on complete obedience to God so we can avoid His judgment in our lives.

DISCUSS: Direct adults to respond to the **Apply the Text** questions on page 55. Guide them to discuss how believers can recognize God's directions and how they can avoid the temptation to follow only a portion of God's Word.

PRAY: Guide adults to pray silently about their obedience to God's commands. After a moment of silence, read 1 Samuel 15:22.

AFTER THE SESSION

Follow up this session with an email or text to the group. Acknowledge that this week's passage may seem harsh, but God's grace is greater than our sin. Challenge them to review and memorize 1 Samuel 15:22.

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