



# First Baptist Church Selmer

FIRM FOUNDATION • KING SAUL •

1 SAMUEL 8:1-9; 9:1-2, 14-17, 25-27; 10:1, 15:24-35 • 10/15/2023

## MAIN POINT

Israel did not trust God's leadership and instead desired an earthly king. God answered this request but Saul failed to lead in a way that honored God.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Do we ever settle for good choices when the best choices are still out there?  
Explain.**

**Have you ever made a choice you thought was right, only to find out later it  
was not the best choice?**

**How does what other people possess affect the choices you make?**

In 1 Samuel, Israel requested a king—a request rooted in their desire to be like their neighboring (pagan) nations. This request revealed their lack of trust in God's leadership, a theme that continued throughout Saul's life. Saul's life is a sad story of unrealized potential, but it's an important reminder of God's desire that we trust Him and His plans for our lives and that we live fully devoted to Him.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 8:1-9.

1 "When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. 2 The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. 3 Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah 5 and said to him, 'Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.' 6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' And Samuel prayed to the Lord. 7 And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. 8 According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. 9 Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.'" (ESV)

**What reasons did Israel's elders give in their request for a king (vv. 4-5)? What was their real reason, according to verse 7?**

**What was wrong with their desire to have a king?**

**How did Samuel respond to the elders? What is the key difference between Samuel's response to the elders and the elders' response to their situation?**

These elders wanted a king who would provide military leadership and make the nation's borders secure. Furthermore, the leaders apparently held the misconception that a king was less susceptible to corruption. The elders, however, chose to address one wrong with another wrong. There was no praying and seeking of the Lord. There was no solemn assembly—no crying out to God. The elders simply demanded that Samuel appoint a king to judge them "the same as all the other nations have" (1 Sam. 8:5). Their motives may appear commendable, logical, and timely. The trouble was that Israel was to be different from all the rest of the nations (Lev. 20:26; Num. 23:9). This fact was a fundamental principle of the Torah. God, and God alone, was Israel's King (Ex. 15:18; Pss. 10:16; 24:10; 93:1).

┆ HAVE A FEW VOLUNTEERS READ 1 SAMUEL 9:1-2; 9:14-17; 9:25-27; AND 10:1.

9:1 "There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. 2 And he had a son whose name was

*Saul, a handsome young man. there was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people."*

*14 "So they went up to the city. As they were entering the city, they saw Samuel coming out toward them on his way up to the high place. 15 Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed to Samuel: 16 'Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me.' 17 When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord told him, 'Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He it is who shall restrain my people.'"*

*25 "And when they came down from the high place into the city, a bed was spread for Saul on the roof, and he lay down to sleep. 26 Then at the break of dawn Samuel called to Saul on the roof, 'Up, that I may send you on your way.' So Saul arose, and both he and Samuel went out into the street. 27 As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, 'Tell the servant to pass on before us, and when he has passed on, stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the word of God.'"*

*10:1 "Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, 'Has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the Lord and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the Lord has anointed you to be prince over his heritage.'" (ESV)*

**What was God's purpose for the future king (9:16)? What does this say about God's character? How does this affect our trust in God?**

**What was the significance of Samuel's private anointing of Saul (10:1)? How do you think Saul felt when Samuel anointed him?**

Samuel's "message from God" first took the form of anointing, an action heretofore reserved for sacred objects and Aaronic priests. The act of pouring a flask of specially prepared olive oil on Saul's head apparently symbolized the staking of a divine claim on him, as well as the outpouring of the Lord's enabling Spirit into the newly designated king. Though Samuel anointed Saul, it was, in fact, the Lord who was responsible for designating Saul as the leader "over his inheritance" (v. 1). Though God desires for us to choose the best and trust Him in those choices, He doesn't abandon us when we make a less than best choice. Though the Israelites had sinned, God was still providing for them.

But consequences come with all choices. God would continue to provide for the Israelites but it would come through another man to follow Saul. Saul's disobedience to God would

come with significant consequences. Samuel shares with Saul that the nation would be spared but he would live out his life as a rejected king.

## | HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 SAMUEL 15:24-35

*24 Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may bow before the Lord." 26 And Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel." 27 As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. 28 And Samuel said to him, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. 29 And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret." 30 Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may bow before the Lord your God." 31 So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul bowed before the Lord.*

*32 Then Samuel said, "Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites." And Agag came to him cheerfully. Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." 33 And Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.*

*34 Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. 35 And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel. (ESV)*

**What were the consequences of Saul's disobedience?**

**How easy it is to base our choices on the opinions of others versus the opinion of God?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How are we tempted to be like Israel and not trust God's leadership in our lives?**

**When was a time you "took things into your own hands" but later realized the foolishness of doing so?**

**How might you share with others about the good leadership of King Jesus using the poor leadership of King Saul?**

## PRAYER

Close in prayer thanking God for His leadership in our lives. Ask Him for further trust in Him and the obedience to live according to His Word.

## COMMENTARY

### | 1 SAMUEL 8-15

Israel's disappointment with the priesthood of Eli and the sin of Samuel's sons led Israel to turn to a new form of leadership. The people, following the example of the nations around them, demanded a king (1 Sam. 8). God granted their desires, and Samuel reluctantly appointed a king. Saul's reign had a promising beginning. King Saul, however, proved unlike Samuel because he did not listen to the word of the Lord. The Lord thus rejected Saul as He had the house of Eli.

God Permits a King (8:1-22). The people requested a king because Samuel's judgeship had begun to fail. He was old; and his sons, like Eli's, were wicked men who perverted justice. Also, the people wanted the benefits of a central authority like the other nations had. Although Samuel resisted, God graciously permitted Israel to have a king. Samuel warned the people of the troubles of kingship, but they persisted; so God granted their request.

God Reveals Israel's King (9:1-27). A Benjamite named Saul searched with his servant for the lost donkeys of his father, Kish. Saul's servant knew of Samuel, the prophet of God. They sought him to inquire of God where they might find the donkeys. On the previous day, God had informed Samuel that he would meet a man from Benjamin whom he should anoint king over Israel. God reserved the right to choose Israel's king (Deut. 17:15). Saul remained with Samuel to attend a sacrificial feast. The next day Samuel detained him to receive a message from God.

Saul Anointed (10:1-27). The message was that God had chosen Saul to be king over Israel. Samuel anointed him with a flask of oil, indicating the special relationship between God and the king (see Deut. 17:15). Because of this custom, the king of Israel became known as the “anointed one” ( Messiah). Three signs followed the anointing to confirm to Saul that God had indeed chosen him. Saul sought after lost donkeys, but he discovered a kingdom.

Samuel anointed Saul again but this time publicly at Mizpah. The people found Saul hiding among the baggage, and they hailed him king. They longed for a king to rival the nations; ironically, they were elated with a shy keeper of donkeys.

Saul at Jabesh (11:1-15). The first test for Saul's reign was the attack of the Ammonites upon Jabesh Gilead across the Jordan. As in the days when the judges ruled, the Spirit came upon Saul, and he became angry. No longer was Saul shy. By exercising his authority as king, he rallied the Israelites. His forces defeated the Ammonites. This confirmed to the people that Saul was an able king.

Samuel's Final Warning (12:1-25). With the installation of Saul, Samuel retired as Israel's civic leader. His final sermon defended his leadership and reviewed God's favor in the past. He indicted the people's sinful choice of a king because they had set aside the kingship of the Lord. Samuel proved his charge by calling upon God to send a thunderstorm. It came during the dry season of the year (May-June) when a thunderstorm was unexpected. After the people confessed their sins, Samuel reminded them that they had nothing to fear from God if they continued in the Lord. If they failed to obey the Lord, however, they and their king would be swept away.

Saul's Foolishness (13:1-14:52). Saul's son, Jonathan, bravely initiated a war with the Philistines. However, the troops of Israel feared the numerous Philistines gathered at Michmash.

Saul awaited Samuel for seven days at Gilgal to offer a sacrifice to entreat the Lord's blessing. When Samuel did not come at the appointed time (see 10:8), Saul's army began to defect. Saul acted foolishly because of impatience. Out of desperation, he disobeyed the prophet Samuel's instructions and offered burnt offerings. Samuel arrived and rebuked Saul for his disobedience. Because he acted foolishly, Samuel prophesied that Saul would lose his kingdom. God would choose “a man after his own heart.” Samuel's rebuke of Saul set the pattern for future relations between the leaders of God's people—prophets and kings. The future history of Israel and Judah illustrates that their kings disobeyed God's prophets to their own peril.

Although Israel had no weapons and were greatly outmanned, Jonathan courageously attacked the Philistines while Saul waited behind in Gibeah. The Philistines fell into disarray because of an earthquake, and Saul called for the ark to consult the Lord's guidance. Yet after he saw the Philistines panic all the more, he abandoned the inquiry and hurried to attack. Despite Saul's impulsive actions, God gave them a great victory.

Saul's pride and hasty decision to restrict Israel from eating during the battle jeopardized his armies' strength and his son's life. Saul built an altar and inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him because of his unbelief. By casting lots, Saul discovered that Jonathan had unknowingly broken Saul's ban of eating. The men of the camp refused Saul's order to execute Jonathan, saving him from Saul's foolish oath.

Because of his disobedience, Saul never totally defeated the Philistines. Despite his sin, God graciously gave him victories and a large family.

Rejection of Saul (15:1-35). Saul's pride and desire for economic gain fueled his continued disobedience. Saul went so far as to build a monument for himself. The Lord "grieved" that he had made Saul king over Israel. The Lord instructed Saul by the prophet Samuel to put to death the Amalekites and all their possessions because of their past sins (see the law of holy war, Deut. 20:16-18). Saul, however, permitted Agag, the Amalekite king, and the best of the spoil to live. The Lord rejected Saul because of his sin, and Samuel wept for him.

When Samuel confronted Saul with his sins, Saul tried to justify his actions by explaining that he wanted to make a sacrifice of the spoil to the Lord. Saul had failed to learn that God does not accept ritual without obedience. Samuel refused to support Saul any longer because God had torn away his kingdom. Samuel himself executed Agag in accordance with the Lord's command. Samuel, as the prophet of God, never advised Saul again (see 19:24; 28:11).