

THE ISRAELITES WANTED A KING

1 SAMUEL 8-10



KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 103:19

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is our King? Jesus is our King forever, and He rules over the world.

CHRIST CONNECTION: The Israelites rejected God as King and chose Saul to be their king. When we sin, we also reject God's rule in our lives as King. Jesus, the King of kings, died for our sin and rose again so we could be forgiven.

STORY POINT: Israel rejected God as King and chose Saul to be their king.



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

As the time of the judges came to an end, God's people grew discontent with the leadership of Samuel's sons. The elders of Israel, desiring to be more like the nations surrounding them, commanded Samuel to appoint a king to rule over them. In His perfect wisdom, God would give His people over to their desire for an earthly king. Yet, God revealed how Israel's desire for an earthly king ultimately showcased their rejection of Him as their one true King.

What were the spiritual implications of the Israelites' desire for a king? How does Christ fit into the narrative?

The Israelites once again found themselves in a season of discontentment—unhappy with their circumstances, as well as God's provision and leadership in their lives. Like their ancestors before them, they forgot how He freed them from slavery and preserved and provided for them as His chosen people. Rather than seeking the Lord with hearts of worship, the Israelites placed their focus on the nations around them. They did not trust in the faithfulness of God to continue providing for them.

Consider the ways we are tempted to place our hope in earthly things rather than on the things above (Colossians 3:2). The people rejected God as their King, and we fall into the same pattern when we seek the things of the world in place of the God who created it.

Lead boys and girls to see how Israel had a divided heart toward God and how Christ came to free us from the power of sin that separates us from Him. When we trust in Jesus by faith, He gives us new hearts that worship Him alone as King. Pray for children's eyes to be opened to the love Christ has shown us through His life, death, and resurrection—freeing us to follow the God who rules and reigns with all power and with all care for His creation.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- ☐ "Find the King" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- ☐ painter's tape



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set
- ☐ world map



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- ☐ "Crown Cards" printable

Journal and Prayer

- ☐ Journal Page
- ☐ "King of Kings" activity page



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- ☐ countdown video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- ☐ Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- ☐ "The Israelites Wanted a King" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids

- ☐ "Unit 10, Session 1" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- ☐ "Temples of Thailand, Part 1" missions video
- ☐ world map

Key Passage Activity

- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "The LORD Is Over All (Psalm 103:19)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)
- ☐ index cards, 1 per kid



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “Have you ever wanted something so much you could not stop thinking about it? Did you get it? If you did, how did it feel to finally have what you wanted?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Find the King” activity page.

SAY “Today, we will learn that the Israelites wanted a king to rule over them like the nations around them.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: YES OR NO

Before this activity, divide the room in half by placing a strip of painter’s tape on the floor. Direct kids to line up on the tape. Call out a subject such as “chocolate ice cream” “loud music” or “skateboarding.” Invite kids to hop to the right of the line for “yes” or hop to the left of the line for “no.” Repeat as time allows with different subjects like food preferences (pizza, hot dogs, broccoli) or activity preferences (fishing, dancing, bike riding).

SAY “During this activity you said ‘yes’ to some things but ‘no’ to others. We call this a preference. A preference is when we like or want something over another choice. Today, we will see how the Israelites made a choice: they preferred a king like the other nations over having God as their King. We’ll learn how **ISRAEL REJECTED GOD AS KING AND CHOSE SAUL TO BE THEIR KING.**”

☐ OPTION 2: RULER FOR A DAY



Invite kids to sit in a large circle. Ask kids to answer the question: “What would you do if you were king or queen for a day?” Begin with one kid in the circle, and allow him to name one action he would take as king. Maybe he would give everyone free soda for a day. Or maybe he would use his power to spend the whole day at an amusement park. Go around the circle, inviting each kid to answer the question. Then discuss how those who rule have authority and power, sometimes using their power for good and other times using it for bad.

SAY “Today, we will learn how the Israelites wanted a king like the other nations around them. Rather than recognize God as their true King, the Israelites wanted to be like the surrounding nations. Yet, God warned His people that when they choose a person to rule over them, they might not like all the power a king will have. Unlike human rulers, God is a good and perfect King who always does what is best for His people. Let’s get ready to learn more about why we should worship God as King.”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “Welcome, kids! My name is [your name], and I’m so glad you are here. Today, we will be hearing how the time of the judges was coming to an end. God’s people began to desire a king like the nations around them. We’ll learn that **ISRAEL REJECTED GOD AS KING AND CHOSE SAUL TO BE THEIR KING.** [Display the Story Point Poster.]

If you have a Bible with you, will you take it out? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] Today, we’ll be in the book of 1 Samuel. Let’s pray and prepare our hearts to hear God’s Word: ‘Lord, thank You for Your Word. Help us learn how You are a good and perfect King. Help our hearts choose to follow You and Your ways. In Jesus’ name, amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “As we study the Bible, we also learn big truths about God, people, and the world. We learn these truths through our big picture questions and answers. Our big picture question is, **Who is our King?** The answer is, **Jesus is our King forever, and He rules over the world.**

Before the world was created, God’s Son, Jesus, existed because Jesus is God (John 1:1). After Jesus came to earth, died on the cross, and rose again, He went back to be with the God the Father in heaven. God has exalted Jesus as King over all. Jesus is King, and because He has all authority over what He made, He will one day restore all of creation. Jesus rules with absolute power, perfection, and goodness. Today, we’ll see how Israel rejected God as their king. However, we can ask God to help us recognize that Jesus is our forever King. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “After Israel conquered the land of Canaan, some of the surrounding nations were still left in the land. As Israel lived in Canaan, they began to worship the false gods of these nations. As a consequence to their sin, God allowed the nations to oppress His people. When the people cried out to God, He sent judges to rescue them.

Let’s review our timeline by remembering some of the judges God sent to rescue His people. [Point to the stories of **The First Judges, Deborah Led Israel, Gideon Led Israel, and Samson and the Philistines.**] Eventually, the Israelites decided they wanted a king to rule over them, just as the other nations had. Today, we’ll see how **ISRAEL REJECTED GOD AS KING AND CHOSE SAUL TO BE THEIR KING.** ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to 1 Samuel 8:1–10:27. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “The Israelites Wanted a King.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

THE ISRAELITES WANTED A KING

“When Samuel grew old, he made his sons judges over Israel. Sadly, Samuel’s sons did not follow his example. They were bad leaders of God’s people.

The elders of Israel went to Samuel and said, “You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Give us a king to be our ruler, just as all the other nations have.”

Samuel prayed to the Lord. God said, “They have not rejected you; they have rejected me as their king. Listen to them, but also warn them about the power a king has over the people he rules.

Samuel went to the people and said, “Here are the things a king will do. He will take your sons to join his army. He will take your daughters to serve in his house. He will take your best fields and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your crops and your flocks. You will cry out for help, but the LORD will not answer you.”

The people refused to listen to Samuel. “No! We must have a king over us,” they said.

God told Samuel, “Listen to the people, and appoint a king for them.”

Now, there was an impressive young man named Saul who was a head taller than everyone else in Israel. One day, his father’s donkeys wandered off, and Saul was sent to find them. After looking for several days, Saul’s servant recommended they ask Samuel for help.

Before Saul met Samuel, God told Samuel that He would send him a man to rule over His people. God said this man would save His people from the Philistines. When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said, “This is the man who will be king over my people Israel.” Samuel took a flask of oil and anointed Saul as the future king. Saul then returned home and said nothing to his family about it.

Later, Samuel called all the people together. One by one, the tribes, clans, and families of Israel came before Samuel, and Saul was selected as king. They searched for him everywhere and could not find him. Then the Lord said, “There he is, hidden with the supplies.”

When the people saw how tall and impressive Saul was, they shouted, “Long live the king!” Samuel appointed Saul as king, and then he sent all the people home.

STORYTELLING TIPS

Active listening:

Challenge kids to listen for the word “king” as you tell the story. When they hear the word, direct kids to place their hands on their heads like a crown.

Define it: Tell kids that Israel’s priests and kings were anointed with oil to show they were set apart for a specific purpose.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Christ Connection: The Israelites rejected God as King and chose Saul to be their king. When we sin, we also reject God's rule in our lives as King. Jesus, the King of kings, died for our sin and rose again so we could be forgiven. ”

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY ” What did the people of Israel tell the prophet Samuel they wanted? Look at 1 Samuel 8:5. [Choose a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 8:5.] Israel looked at other nations and saw that they had earthly kings ruling over them. The people decided they wanted a king like the surrounding nations. They wanted a king who would judge them, go before them, and fight their battles (1 Samuel 8:19-20). However, God had already fought many battles for His people and displayed that He is more powerful than any earthly king. God had rightly judged His people and gone before them, leading them from Egypt to the Promised Land.

Who did God say Israel rejected as king over them? Look at 1 Samuel 8:7. [Choose a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 8:7.] God told Samuel that the people did not reject Samuel as their leader, but they rejected God as their King. By choosing an earthly king, the people of Israel rejected God's rule. Samuel warned the people that having a human king would not be what was best for them. Yet, the people didn't listen. God told Samuel to listen to Israel and appoint a king over them.

Who did Israel choose as their king? [Allow responses.] **ISRAEL REJECTED GOD AS KING AND CHOSE SAUL TO BE THEIR KING.** Saul was impressive in appearance, even standing a head taller than anyone else. Often, people can make choices based on appearances rather than on the wisdom of God. The people of Israel rejected God as King and did not listen to His wisdom. When we sin, we also reject God's rule in our lives as King. Jesus, the King of kings, died for our sin and rose again so we could be forgiven. His plans for us are better than any plans we could make for ourselves. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY ” Sometimes we might be tempted to turn to earthly powers for comfort, protection, or help. We might be deceived by appearances, like Israel. However, God has proven that His Son, Jesus, is the perfect King. Unlike earthly powers, only Jesus can save us from sin. Only He does what is right and good for us always. We can submit to Jesus as King knowing He showed His perfect love to us through His death and resurrection. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 10, Session 1” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Why was Jesus known as King?
2. Have you accepted Jesus as the King of your life? Do you worship Him alone? Why?



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

SAY “ More than 15 million people live in Bangkok, the colorful, busy capital city of Thailand. [Point to Bangkok on a world map.] Thailand is often referred to as ‘The Land of Smiles.’ Smiling is a way the people show politeness, care, and forgiveness. Even though Thai people show kindness to others, many of them do not know about Jesus. In this growing city, less than 3 percent of the people are Christians. ”

Play the missions video. Explain how missionary Doug Derbyshire helps people as a medical doctor in Bangkok, Thailand. Tell kids that Dr. Derbyshire’s clinic serves as a hub for telling people throughout the country about Jesus. Sometimes Dr. Derbyshire’s clinic helpers and medical teams from the United States host mobile clinics, which allow them to help people in many different areas and tell them about Jesus. Pray for Dr. Derbyshire and his staff as they tell people in Thailand about Jesus. Pray that many Thai people will learn about Jesus.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Psalm 103:19 together.

SAY “ Our God reigns as King over heaven and earth. He is a King who is mighty to save those who trust in Him. ”

Distribute an index card and Bible to each kid. Direct kids to look up Psalm 103:19. Then lead kids to write the verse on their index card. Challenge kids to use their card as a way to memorize the key passage throughout the week.

Lead kids to sing “The LORD Is Over All (Psalm 103:19).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “ Lord, You are the King above all kings. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to save us from our sins. Help us trust You and submit to You as King of our lives. In Jesus’ name, amen. ”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles, and display the Old Testament Mediterranean Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to 1 Samuel 8. Explain that the book of 1 Samuel, where today's story takes place, is found in the Old Testament section of the Bible and is named after Samuel, Israel's last judge.

Consider comparing the Old Testament Mediterranean Map to a modern-day map to help kids understand where this story took place. (Tip: Locate the areas in and around modern-day Israel [F10]). Choose a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 8:9, or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

SAY “ God told Samuel to warn the people of Israel about what it would be like to have a king like the nations around them. God did this out of His love and mercy toward His people, but they rejected God as King and rejected His warning.

God warns us to turn away from sin and the ways of the world. He tells us to be on guard and to follow Him closely. Sometimes we might think our way is better than God's way. But anytime we reject God as King in our lives, we sin. God is a good and righteous King who made the way for sinful people to be saved. When we trust in King Jesus, we follow God's plan for our lives. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ Why did the Israelites choose Saul to be their king? ”

Remind kids that the Bible tells us the people looked at Saul's outward appearance and thought he would make a good king. Discuss how God desired for His people to trust Him, even though they couldn't see Him. Encourage kids to trust in God as King, submitting to His good authority, no matter the circumstance. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 7:24.)

SAY “ How can comparison and wanting what others have tempt us to reject God's authority? ”

Tell kids that when we begin comparing our lives to others and wanting what others have, we can fall into the trap of thinking we know what is best for us or that God is keeping good things from us. God is King over everything and knows what is best for us. We can trust God's Word and remember how God proved His love for us through His Son, Jesus. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 119:68.)

SAY “ What can we do when we sin and reject God's Word? ”

Discuss how God tells us in His Word that when we confess our sins, He will forgive us and cleanse us. When we confess our sins to God, we must also turn away from repeating that sin. Instead, we follow God's instructions, trusting that He has the best plans for our lives. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Isa. 55:7.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: JESUS IS KING

Distribute scissors and a “Crown Cards” printable to each kid. (Tip: Print the cards on cardstock for more durability.) Direct kids to cut out each card and shuffle them into a pile. Form kids into groups of two to four. Lead kids to place their card piles face down. Direct kids to take turns removing a card from the top of their pile and place it face-up in a pile alongside it. Play continues until two face-up piles have identical cards on top. When two cards on the tops of any of these piles are identical, the first kid to shout “Jesus is King!” takes both face-up piles with the identical cards and adds them to the bottom of their own stack. The player who accumulates all the cards wins.

SAY “As we’ll come to see, no earthly king is perfect or can save people from their sin. Saul was just a man, who the people chose as their king. Jesus, the King of kings, died for our sin and rose again so we could be forgiven. The King we need to rule our hearts is King Jesus.”

☐ OPTION 2: THE KING WHO SAVES



Form kids into groups of three or four, and provide each group with a Bible, paper, and a pen. Instruct groups to look up 1 Samuel 10:17-19. Lead kids to write down all the good things God had done for His people. Then invite groups to share their responses (Example: rescued Israel from Egypt, saved Israel from distresses, etc.).

Guide groups to look up and read Isaiah 33:22. Discuss how Saul would never be a king who could save people from their sin. Share how after Saul, the Israelites had many kings, yet none of them could bring salvation. In fact, the people continued sinning and were eventually taken captive by foreign nations. Share how Isaiah reminds us who the true King is—the Lord—and how He alone saves His people.

SAY “ISRAEL REJECTED GOD AS KING AND CHOSE SAUL TO BE THEIR KING. Jesus is the true King who saves people from their sins. We can ask God to give us hearts that accept Jesus as Savior and King.”

2 JOURNAL AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel, and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions. Then pray, asking God to help us trust Him as King in every area of our lives. As time allows, lead kids to complete “King of Kings” on the activity page.