

Lessons 71–80

God Calls Leaders

Unit

8

Adult

Student Guide



Answers Bible Curriculum

Unit 8 • Adult Student

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Printed in China.

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Introduction to Answers Bible Curriculum

God gave the Israelites the promised land and they reaped the benefit of his provision, but they also later reaped the consequences of their disobedience.

Once they had settled the land and things were peaceful, the people turned to idolatry. When they were oppressed by enemy armies, they would cry out to God, who would raise up a judge to deliver them. But when peace came, they would again turn to false gods.

This pattern continued until the people demanded a man to rule them, rejecting God as their king. God warned them of the dangers, but when they insisted, he gave them what they asked for.

Though Israel rejected him, God showed mercy and remained faithful to his promises to his people.

We encourage you to read the Prepare to Learn section before class each week. This will provide important background information, so that you will get more from each lesson.



God Uses Gideon

Lesson Focus

The Israelites sinned and worshipped false gods, but they cried to God to deliver them from the oppression of the Midianites. God chose Gideon as the judge who would lead the Israelites in battle. God was patient with Gideon's fears and doubts and gave him and his 300 men the victory over the vast Midianite army.

Key Passages

Judges 6:1–2, 6:11–16, 7:2–7, 7:16–22;
1 Corinthians 15:9–10

What You Will Learn

- How God encouraged Gideon as a leader.
- God's role in defeating the Midianites.

Memory Verse

Psalm 34:17–18 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural Background

The recurring cycle of Israel's history during the time of the judges continued for about 300 years. This cycle included the Israelites' disobedience and idolatry, God's judgment on them through neighboring nations, their cry to God for deliverance, God's mercy and compassion in raising up judges to deliver them, and their peace until they again fell back into idolatry. In Judges 6 we find that because the Israelites were once again doing evil in the sight of the Lord, God allowed them to be oppressed by the Midianites. They finally cried out to him for help, and God sent a prophet to tell them why they were being oppressed (Judges 6:6–10). The Lord was about to provide an unlikely hero for them through Gideon.

The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, who was threshing wheat in secret so that the raiding Midianites would not take it (not a very valiant act). Surprisingly, the angel of the Lord called Gideon a “mighty man of valor.” He told Gideon that he would lead Israel to defeat its current oppressors, the Midianites. Gideon revealed his fear and lack of trust in the Lord as he responded that he was from the weakest clan of Israel and the least in his family (Judges 6:15). But the Lord responded with confidence, explaining that he would be with him. In Judges 6:14, the Lord had told Gideon to “Go in

this might of yours,” but God also clearly told him the source of that might—himself. And in verse 34, as Gideon gathered men for battle, it was because the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. Scripture is clear that it was the Lord moving in these events, using Gideon; it was not Gideon's own strength or ability that won the victory. We see, as the account unfolds, that God wanted his power alone to be demonstrated.

In Judges 7, a substantial number of men had rallied to Gideon (though they would still have been outnumbered by the Midianites). God gave Gideon orders to reduce the number of men who would participate in the battle. First, any who were fearful were commanded to leave. Next, God directed Gideon to accept only those who drank by lapping the water from their hands. Thus, the fighting force was reduced to a mere 300 to face the Midianite army of 135,000. God wanted the victory of this battle to point to him alone as deliverer. He did not want the Israelites to think that this victory was theirs. God knew the Israelites would be tempted to think that they had saved themselves (Judges 7:2).

The account of the battle is dramatic. Gideon's 300 men stealthily approached the Midianites with covered torches. Suddenly, at Gideon's signal, they blew their trumpets, broke the jars that covered their

torches and shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon,” inciting panic among the Midianites (Judges 7:20–21). In the midst of this panic, God ordained that the Midianites would turn their swords on each other—this was God’s battle, and the victory was accomplished by his power, working through Gideon’s obedience (Judges 7:22).

God used Gideon, a simple man, to accomplish a great victory against a fearful opponent. Gideon was obedient and proved to be strong, due to the Lord’s strength in him. Gideon was the fifth and one of the greatest judges of Israel. Because of his faith in the Lord, he is mentioned with the great and faithful saints in Hebrews 11.

Historical/Apologetics Background

Gideon acted faithfully and courageously in battle, but God desires to be the object of his people’s worship and gratitude, and he will not share that worship: “I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols” (Isaiah 42:8). God used people all through history and continues to use people today to accomplish his will. But he makes it clear that even when he does so, it is he who ultimately deserves the credit: “For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). Both the desire and the ability to obey God are the results of God working in us.

In Judges 8, we find that the men of Ephraim wanted to share the credit that belonged to God for the battle

It could only have been the Lord who would allow 300 men to defeat the vast Midianite army. Gideon realized this. The people, however, were quick to forget, as evidenced when they requested that Gideon rule over them (Judges 8:22). Gideon’s loyalty to God shone bright as he turned down this honor and reminded the people of God’s sovereignty in his rule over them (Judges 8:23).

Sadly, Gideon compromised his faith by requesting and accepting offerings of gold, plundered by Israel from their enemies, and he used the gold to make an ephod (a kind of ceremonial breastplate). This ephod, set up in Gideon’s city of Ophrah, became a snare to Gideon and his family (Judges 8:27).

won. We then find that the men of Succoth and Penuel would not credit God (or anyone) without proof of a certain outcome. And finally, we see that Israel, rather than giving credit to God for using Gideon, gave Gideon credit instead of God. This inclination to overlook and disbelieve that it was God who orchestrated the victory was at the root of Israel’s tendency to fall back into sin, even after a deliverance such as this. God uses his people to accomplish his perfect plans. But when the plans are accomplished, we must not forget that we are his workmanship created to do the good works he has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Gideon judged Israel for 40 years, and the land had peace from the Midianites (Judges 8:28). Unfortunately,

Gideon fell into polygamy, which was never God's plan for marriage (Genesis 2:24). Gideon's many wives bore him 70 sons, and a concubine in Shechem bore him a son named Abimelech (Judges 8:30–31). Abimelech became king of Shechem after murdering his 69 brothers (Judges 9:5–6). He judged Israel for three years before God punished him for his sins (Judges

9:22, 9:56). Gideon's family suffered and was nearly destroyed because of Gideon's failure to follow God's plan for marriage. We see a similar pattern of jealousy and murder as a result of polygamy in the families of Jacob and King David. May God guard us from seeking to rob him of glory or walking in willful disobedience to him.



Studying God's Word

Why did God choose Gideon?

Take notes as you study the following passage.

Mighty Gideon's Call

Judges 6:11–24

A Dwindling Army

Judges 7:1–8

Judges 8:10

Judges 7:15–25

1 Corinthians 15:9–10

Faith and Fleeces Activity

God used Gideon to accomplish the deliverance of Israel from the Midianites, and Gideon is set forth as an example of faith in Hebrews 11. Answer the following questions as you read the passages:

Read Judges 6:36–40.

1. Was Gideon trusting the promises of God from 6:12, 6:14, and 6:16?
2. Was Gideon testing God?
3. What does Deuteronomy 6:16 say about tempting or testing God?

Read Hebrews 11:32–34.

4. Which of the descriptions in verses 33 and 34 apply to Gideon?
5. Did Gideon always exhibit faith?

When we look at a narrative passage of Scripture like the account of Gideon, we must examine the passage and the rest of Scripture to decide if it is an example for us to follow or an example to teach us a lesson (or both). Some passages are prescriptive, telling us how to live, while other passages are descriptive, simply describing an event that occurred.

6. In light of these passages (and other passages that may come to mind as you think about testing God), is Judges 6:36–40 giving us a description of what happened, an example to follow, or both?
7. Should we be setting fleeces before the Lord to test him, or should we be obeying the commands he has given us in his Word?

Application

1. In what ways do you identify with Gideon’s response as he is called to a role of leadership?
2. What encouragement to live your life in obedience to Christ do you find in this account?
3. Why is it right for God to demand that mankind worship him?
4. What type of skepticism would you expect to hear from someone who doubts the account of Gideon and the battle with the Midianites?



Prayer Requests

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Samson Receives Strength

Lesson Focus

God set Samson apart from birth to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines. Samson defeated the Philistines and judged Israel for 20 years. Samson lost his strength when women became more important to him than God, and he was captured by the Philistines. When Samson prayed for forgiveness and strength, God enabled him to collapse a building, destroying more than 3,000 Philistines.

Key Passages

Judges 13:1–25, 14:1–7, 14:18–15:16, 16:1–31;
Numbers 6:2–8; Hebrews 11:32–38

What You Will Learn

- What God promised through Samson.
- How God used Samson to conquer the Philistines.
- The weaknesses of Samson and how to avoid them.

Memory Verse

Psalm 34:17–18 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural Background

The period of the 14 judges extended over about 300 years. It began around 1400 BC with the first judge, Othniel, and ended with the prophet and judge Samuel (see table below). The period of judges occurred during a very dark time of backsliding in Israel's history. Within the book we see the repeated themes of the Israelites' disobedience to God and God's faithfulness to forgive and deliver the people when they repented. We also see the recurring theme that God uses people—even the wicked, idolatrous enemy nations of Israel and the imperfect judges—to bring judgment, to promote reconciliation with his people, and to fulfill his perfect will however he deems necessary.

Despite Israel's repeated sin, the Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges but abandoned the Lord and bowed down to false gods. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the Lord. And when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. When the judge was dead, they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from evil or from their stubborn ways.

The evil of idolatry caused the Lord to deliver the Israelites into the hand of the Philistines for 40 years (Judges 13:1). It was at this time that God appeared to the barren wife of Manoah and promised a son who would deliver the people. God also specified that the boy would be set apart by following the laws of a Nazirite, which included drinking no wine, eating no unclean thing, and not shaving his head (Judges 13:4-5). The son born to Manoah and his wife was Samson, who received God's blessing and supernatural strength. Samson was the twelfth judge and the last one recorded in the book of Judges. God

Judge	Reference	Period
Othniel	Judg. 3:9-11	40
Ehud	Judg. 3:15-30	80
Shamgar	Judg. 3:31	10
Deborah	Judg. 4:4-5:31	40
Gideon	Judg. 6:7-8:35	40
Tola	Judg. 10:1-2	23
Jair	Judg. 10:3-5	22
Jephthah	Judg. 11:1-12:7	6
Ibzan	Judg. 12:8-10	7
Elon	Judg. 12:11-12	10
Abdon	Judg. 12:13-15	8
Samson	Judg. 13:2-16:31	20
Eli	1 Sam. 4:18	40
Samuel	1 Sam. 7	21

used even Samson's mistakes to accomplish his will against the Philistines. Samson's failed marriage to a Philistine woman eventually led to a battle in which Samson defeated 1,000 Philistines using just the jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15:14–15). He judged Israel for 20 years.

Despite his victories and feats of strength, Samson had a weakness for ungodly women with loyalty to the Philistines. His love for Delilah led to him revealing his special relationship to God as a Nazirite. Delilah betrayed him to the Philistines, and God removed his empowering Spirit. Samson was captured,

blinded, and forced to grind at the mill in a Philistine prison (Judges 16:15–22). Because of God's mercy, Samson's account does not end there. God listened to Samson's prayer for strength to destroy about 3,000 Philistines who gathered to worship their false god, Dagon, and to mock Samson and the true God. Blind Samson, positioned between two pillars, was given the strength to collapse the whole building filled with Philistines (Judges 16:23–30). Samson had his failings, but he repented and showed great faith, as noted in Hebrews 11:32–34.

Historical/Apologetics Background

Samson was born to a barren woman and dedicated to God from the womb. The Nazirite vow described in Numbers 6:1–21 was typically done for a specified time. The term “Nazirite” comes from a Hebrew term that indicates dedication by separation. The Nazirite vow, which could be made by a man or a woman, included separation to the Lord by avoiding grape products, hair-cutting, and contact with a dead body. In Judges 13, Manoah's wife followed Nazirite restrictions while she was pregnant, and God told her and her husband that Samson would be a Nazirite to the day of his death (Judges 13:7). It is important to note that Samson's long hair was not the source of his strength—God was. Scripture repeats that the Spirit of the Lord enabled Samson to do his miraculous deeds, including killing a lion with his bare hands (Judges

14:6), striking Philistines (Judges 14:19, 15:14–15), transporting a city gate (Judges 16:3), and bringing down a building (Judges 16:28–30). Samson acknowledged God's hand in his victory when he prayed for water after killing 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15:18). However, his desire to fulfill the lusts of the flesh led to poor choices in women: first the Philistine woman in Timnah, then a Philistine prostitute in Gaza, and finally Delilah in the Valley of Sorek, who would be his downfall. These women showed loyalty to the Philistines over Samson.

The Philistines are first mentioned in the listing of nations descended from Noah's son Ham (Genesis 10:13–14). The Greek version of their name is where we get the name Palestine. It is believed that the Philistines migrated from

the island of Crete and the Aegean region to the area of Canaan along the Mediterranean coast. They controlled land in Canaan as early as the time of Abraham and Isaac (see Genesis 21:32–34, 26:1). God later directed Moses and the Israelites around the land of the Philistines to avoid war (Exodus 13:17). By the time of the conquest, the Philistines had moved inland and controlled five city-states: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron (Joshua 13:3). Each city was controlled by a “lord” or “king.” It was significant that

the lords of the Philistines, likely the rulers of these cities, came to Delilah and each offered her a large sum of silver if she would discover the source of Samson’s strength and tell them (Judges 16:4–6). Delilah appeared to care more for material gain than for Samson, while Samson cared more for Delilah than being obedient to God. May God strengthen us to avoid the desires of the flesh and of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16), which all end in destruction.

Studying God’s Word

How does God use flawed individuals to advance his purposes?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Samson’s Birth

Judges 13:1–25

Numbers 6:2–8

Samson’s Strength

Judges 14:1–7

Judges 14:18–15:8

Judges 15:14–16

Judges 16:1–6

Judges 16:18–31

Samson's Failings Activity

What Scripture records of Samson offers us little to imitate and much to turn away from. Examine the passages below to understand how Samson's life compared to God's revealed will for his life. For each passage, write a brief summary of how Samson violated God's commands. Then answer the questions.

- Judges 14:1; Deuteronomy 7:3–4

- Judges 14:8–9; Leviticus 5:2

- Judges 16:1; Leviticus 18:20

- Judges 16:10, 16:13; Leviticus 19:11

1. Read Hebrews 11:32–38. Which of the descriptions would seem to apply to Samson?
2. How is it that Samson can be seen as a model of faith if he was so disobedient to God in these instances?
3. How does your answer to the question above help you understand your role as a servant of God?

Application

1. How might a skeptic challenge the ideas presented in the account of Samson?
2. How did God use Samson’s weaknesses to bring about his plans?
3. How does Samson fit into the pattern of sin/repentance/deliverance that we have seen in Judges?
4. Samson was a man who was sent to be a deliverer for Israel, much as Jesus was sent to be a deliverer. How does Jesus compare to Samson as a deliverer of his people?
5. In what way can you find encouragement in the account of Samson?



Prayer Requests



God Blesses Ruth

Lesson Focus

Ruth proved her loyalty to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and to the God of Israel by returning with Naomi to the land of Israel. God rewarded Ruth's faithfulness by providing a redeemer, Boaz, who married Ruth and took care of her and Naomi. Boaz's redemption of Ruth is a picture of Jesus' redemption of sinners.

Key Passages

Ruth 1-4; Deuteronomy 25:5-6; 1 Peter 3:18;
2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:6-8

What You Will Learn

- How Boaz's kindness to Ruth compares with Jesus' kindness toward sinners.
- Ruth's place in the genealogy of Jesus.

Memory Verse

Psalm 34:17-18 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural Background

During the time of the judges (Ruth 1:1), Naomi and Elimelech, natives of Bethlehem in Judah, with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, moved to the country of Moab to avoid a famine. Elimelech died in the land of Moab, and afterward the two sons married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. After about 10 years, the two sons died, leaving Naomi alone with her daughters-in-law.

In that time and culture, life was very difficult for a widow. Naomi told Ruth and Orpah to return to their own people as Naomi intended to return to hers. She explained that she was too old to have more sons, and even if she did, it would take too long for the sons to grow up to be the husbands of her daughters-in-law. Both daughters-in-law protested. Orpah finally did return to her people. But Ruth adamantly refused, declaring determined allegiance not only to Naomi but also to her people and to her God (Ruth 1:16–17). This is to be understood as more than personal loyalty and love to Naomi. Rather, Ruth declared her intent to forsake her family and the false religion of the Moabites and to attach herself to the true God and his covenant people. In that culture, Ruth took a radical and courageous step. Certainly, she must have loved Naomi, but this kind of commitment to Israel and to God, regardless of the lack of familial connections in

Israel, was a nearly certain path to poverty. Though beloved by Ruth, Naomi was not in a position to provide for her material needs. Ruth's courage is much to be admired.

When Ruth and Naomi returned to make their home in Bethlehem, they were in the position of little more than beggars. This was evidenced in the manner Ruth obtained food for them, following harvesting field workers and picking up (“gleaning”) what little they dropped as they harvested. It was customary (and commanded in Leviticus 23:22) to allow the poor to gather food this way. The owner of the field, Boaz, compassionately instructed his young men to leave more than usual for Ruth, and Boaz recognized and admired the path this young Moabite woman had followed. His blessing to her makes it clear that she had not only been loyal to Naomi but had also entrusted herself to the Lord God of Israel: “A full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, *under whose wings you have come to take refuge*” (Ruth 2:12).

Boaz was a close relative of Naomi's, one who could be expected to take responsibility for the care of Ruth and Naomi. In chapter 3, after being instructed by Naomi, Ruth came to Boaz by night at the threshing floor in a manner intended to show that she wished to be under his care; and Boaz responded favorably,

impressed with Ruth's virtue and her kindness in not pursuing younger men. Boaz was apparently much older than Ruth (Ruth 3:10–11).

The account culminates in chapter 4 when Boaz confronted a closer relative of Naomi's with the opportunity he had to "redeem"—to buy back into the close family—the land that had belonged to Naomi's husband. The redemption of the land included, by custom in Israel, the responsibility to care for the widow of Elimelech (Naomi). The care also included Ruth since she was part

of the family and, because she was a young woman, involved marriage to her for the continuation of the family name (Ruth 4:5). Naomi's closer relative was unwilling to get involved since it would affect the inheritance in his own family. Boaz was willing to marry Ruth, however, and God blessed them with a son (Ruth 4:13). Boaz's redemption and marriage to Ruth led to her occupying a place in Jesus' ancestry. Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David (Ruth 4:17; Matthew 1:1).

Historical/Apologetics Background

The redemption of Ruth by Boaz is a touching story of commitment and compassion, but it is much more than that. As Ruth's close relative ("redeemer" in the ESV), Boaz is certainly a type of Christ, our Redeemer. While it was costly for Boaz to redeem Ruth, Jesus Christ paid so much more for his bride. He set aside the privileges of his deity (Godhood) for our benefit (Philippians 2:5–11). For our sakes, he who was rich became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). He who was without sin became sin for us so that "in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Boaz went beyond the call of duty to show his love and concern for Ruth, and Jesus more so. Because of Jesus' shed blood, we can have our sins forgiven (Ephesians 1:7) and be adopted into the family of God (Galatians 4:4–5).

Boaz demonstrated a heart of compassion for Naomi and Ruth when he redeemed them from their

hopeless situation. According to the laws God gave to Moses, a close relative could redeem (buy back) a family member sold into slavery (Leviticus 25:47–49), land that was sold due to hardship (Leviticus 25:23–28), and the family name through levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5–10). Levirate marriage (meaning "husband's brother") was intended to provide an heir for an Israelite man who died childless. This option applied to unmarried close male relatives, such as brothers and cousins, who wanted to keep the property in the family. In the case of Naomi, Boaz had to defer to a closer relative and give him the option of buying Naomi's land and marrying Ruth. This relative refused because of his own children and gave up his legal right to the land and Ruth (Ruth 4:3–6), clearing the way for Boaz to redeem the land and marry Ruth to raise up an heir for Mahlon (Ruth 4:9–10).

Both Boaz and Ruth are described as “worthy” (Ruth 2:1, 3:11), which shows their godly character. Some may question the scene described at the threshing floor where Ruth laid at Boaz’s feet in the night (Ruth 3:6–14). But Ruth’s action did not signify any immorality but rather her desire to marry Boaz, a marriage he probably would not have initiated with a younger woman.

It is also significant in this account that Ruth was a Gentile (a non-Israelite). The picture of her being drawn into covenant in the nation of Israel recalls God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:4 that he would be the father of many nations. It also foreshadows God’s promise that the Messiah, Jesus, would be a “light for revelation to the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32).

Studying God’s Word

How is Ruth related to Jesus?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Ruth’s Faithfulness

Ruth 1:1–22

Ruth and Boaz

Ruth 2–4

Deuteronomy 25:5–6

1 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:6–8

Ruth's Legacy Activity

Use the following passages of Scripture to examine the genealogy of Jesus. Answer the questions to understand the connections among the people mentioned.

- Ruth 4:13–22
 - Luke 3:31–34
 - Matthew 1:1–6
1. Sketch out a rough outline below of the genealogy from Salmon to King David, using the three genealogies above.

2. What women are mentioned in these genealogies? Write their names in the above outline where they fit.
3. What was Ruth's relationship to King David?
4. What is the connection between Ruth and Jesus?

Application

1. How has this lesson helped you understand God's grace toward sinful people?
2. In what ways did Ruth demonstrate her faith in God, and what can we learn from these acts?
3. How could you use this account with an unbelieving friend to explain the gospel?
4. What does Ruth's nationality tell us about the nature of the gospel?
5. Knowing that the events that began in this account in Bethlehem would lead to the birth of the Messiah, what do we learn about God?



Prayer Requests

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God Calls Samuel

Lesson Focus

God called Samuel as a young man and gave him a message of judgment on Eli's family and the nation of Israel. God's prophecy came to pass during a battle between the Israelites and the Philistines. God let the Philistines defeat the Israelites, kill the wicked sons of Eli, and capture the ark of the covenant.

Key Passages

1 Samuel 2:23–26, 3:2–13, 3:15, 4:10–11

What You Will Learn

- How Samuel responded to God.
- How God judged Eli.

Memory Verse

Psalm 34:17–18 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural Background

As the book of 1 Samuel opens, we meet Hannah, wife of Elkanah. She was in distress at being childless. During an annual visit to the tabernacle in Shiloh, Hannah breathed a prayer to God, asking him for a son. She vowed to the Lord that if he would grant her a son, he would be given to the Lord's service for his whole life, and no razor would touch his head. Her wordless prayer was mistaken by the high priest Eli for drunkenness. But after Hannah shared her grief and prayer with the priest, he blessed her, asking God to grant her request. The Lord did remember her, and she conceived. Her son was born, and she "called his name Samuel, for she said, 'I have asked for him from the LORD'" (1 Samuel 1:20). Hannah cared for him in the family's home until he was weaned. Then she gave him into the care of Eli so that Samuel would be devoted to serving the Lord as a helper to the priest, just as Hannah had promised the Lord.

Eli seemed to be a devout man, but he was weak regarding his responsibilities. His sons were wicked, corrupt, immoral, and self-serving (1 Samuel 2:12–17, 2:22), and though Eli admonished them, he failed to restrain them (1 Samuel 3:13). God's judgment was pronounced not only on Eli's house but also on Israel (1 Samuel 2:27–36) because the people had again turned to idols.

The entire period of the judges shows a cycle of behavior in Israel: wickedness and idolatry, judgment, cries for mercy, deliverance by God through the means of a judge, and then a lapse back into wickedness, which started the cycle all over again. During Eli's lifetime, God sent the Philistines against the Israelites as punishment for turning to false gods.

Through these events, Samuel played a faithful part. God had chosen to reveal his plan of judgment to this young man under Eli's care. Samuel was lying down and thought that he heard Eli call him. The priest had not called, and at the third visit from Samuel, Eli realized that the Lord was the one speaking. Eli instructed Samuel to be receptive and obedient: "You shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears'" (1 Samuel 3:9). In this context, Samuel was "hearing" with a will to obey. Samuel received fearful news from the Lord that night, news of God's plan to judge Eli's household (1 Samuel 3:11–12). The judgment foretold to Samuel would prove to be God's final judgment on Israel during this dark era of history under the judges. Sadly, even in the next period of Israel's history under kings instead of judges, Israel continued to be unfaithful to God, and both Israel and Judah ended up in captivity.

Eli's response to the judgment intended for him and his family may

seem noble at first: “It is the LORD. Let him do what seems good to him” (1 Samuel 3:18). But at closer look, Eli’s history of failing to manage his own household after repeated pronouncement of judgment indicates that Eli was unrepentant and inappropriately passive—unmoved to act by the Lord’s warning, just as he had been previously.

After the pronouncement of God’s judgment, Israel went out to battle against the Philistines (1 Samuel 4). Israel was defeated. The people responded by sending for the ark of the covenant to be brought to the battlefield (1 Samuel 4:3–4), apparently thinking that it would serve as a kind of spiritual force of protection and power.

The people believed that the Lord’s power was necessary to defeat the Philistines. But this belief seems distorted when we consider the corruption in the tabernacle, perpetrated by Eli’s sons, and the continuing cycle of the nation’s idolatry recorded in the book of Judges.

Historical/Apologetics Background

There are many parallels between Samuel and Christ. Both were conceived by God’s intervention, though only Jesus was conceived in a virgin by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:34–35). Both were to be instrumental in the deliverance of Israel, though the kinds of deliverance were different (1 Samuel 7:3–13; Matthew 1:21). Both were used by God to usher in a kingdom. Both arrived on the scene at a time in history when God’s dealing with Israel was to change dramatically.

Their intent in this instance was to use the ark as assurance of victory through God’s power. However, the living and true God will not be used; he will not allow even his covenant people victory if they attempt to use him for their own ends rather than serving and glorifying him. God intends that his power and might—not the power and might of men—be revealed and praised.

The Philistines did, in fact, fear the outcome of the battle when the ark was brought to the camp of the Israelites. But they had no idea that God’s judgment on his people was about to be executed. The Philistines won that battle, killing 30,000 Israelite soldiers, and captured the ark of the covenant. Both of Eli’s sons died in the battle (1 Samuel 4:10–11). Eli, upon hearing that his sons were dead and the ark was taken, fell backward off his seat, broke his neck, and died (1 Samuel 4:18). These events fulfilled the Word of the Lord delivered by Samuel, whom God raised up to be a faithful prophet, priest, and judge.

Both spoke God’s words; they were his prophets (Samuel was also a priest and judge while Christ is a priest and king). Their mothers showed great faith and obedience to God. The song of Hannah bears remarkable resemblance to the song of Mary, who likely was familiar with Hannah’s prayer of praise and borrowed from its imagery. (1 Samuel 2:1–10; Luke 1:46–55).

There are other similarities in descriptions and phrases, such as both being described from childhood

as growing in stature and in favor with God and men (1 Samuel 2:26; Luke 2:52). Samuel is a type—a pattern, a living illustration—foreshadowing God’s unfolding plan to bring Jesus to save his people from their sins. By definition, types are

necessarily incomplete, imperfect illustrations, but the similarities are still striking; and as we look back from our time, they show how God was graciously preparing Israel for the time in which the Messiah would come.

Studying God’s Word

Do you have a lucky rabbit’s foot?

Take notes as you study the following passage.

Samuel’s Call

1 Samuel 1–3

Lucky Charms Activity

In this activity you will be comparing some of the superstitious practices in your culture to the way the Israelites used the ark of the covenant in the battle against the Philistines.

1. List out as many cultural superstitious practices, items, or sayings as you can in two minutes.
2. Read 1 Samuel 4:1–11. What was the purpose of bringing the ark of the covenant to the battle?

3. Look carefully at 1 Samuel 4:3. What mistake did the Israelites make?
4. How does the Israelites' use of the ark of the covenant compare to the use of items or the practice of activities from question 1?
5. Do you need to repent of any of these superstitious practices?

Take notes as you study the following passage.

Wickedness Judged

1 Samuel 4:12–22

Application

1. What lesson can we learn today from Samuel's response to God?
2. We read of how the Israelites put their trust in the presence of the ark rather than in God. Where can you confront the use of good luck charms and medallions or other superstitious practices while pointing people to Christ?

3. How does learning about God's attributes displayed in these accounts offer you assurance?

4. With whom could you share what you have learned today to encourage or challenge them?



Prayer Requests



Israel's First King

Lesson Focus

Israel rejected God as king and instead asked Samuel for a human king. Samuel warned them what would happen with their kings, but the people insisted. God chose Saul to be Israel's first king. Saul began his reign in humble obedience to God, but then he disobeyed specific commands God gave him. For his disobedience, Saul would lose the kingdom, the Spirit of God, and his friendship with Samuel.

Key Passages

Genesis 1; Samuel 8, 10:17–27, 13:8–15, 15:1–34;
John 14:15

What You Will Learn

- How God warned Israel against having a king.
- Who the first king over Israel was.
- The consequences of Saul's disobedience to God.

Memory Verse

Psalm 34:17–18 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural Background

Samuel's allegiance to God during his leadership in Israel established a time of peace between Israel and the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:13–14). Samuel appointed his sons as judges after him. Unfortunately, they did not follow Samuel's example. They became greedy, taking bribes and perverting justice (1 Samuel 8:3). This was when the elders of Israel gathered to ask Samuel to appoint a king who would rule them like all the other nations (1 Samuel 8:3–5).

The Israelites' desire for a king—a permanent ruler who would be responsible for the well-being of the nation in a comprehensive way and who would therefore have comprehensive authority—revealed their desire to switch their loyalty to a man rather than depending on and obeying God. It was this inclination that God addressed when he said to Samuel, “They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them” (1 Samuel 8:7). Samuel warned the people that the king would tax them and take their children and possessions. Despite the warnings, the people reaffirmed that they wanted an earthly king to lead them and fight their battles; they wanted to be like all the other nations. God declared that he would grant their desire; Samuel was to appoint a king (1 Samuel 8:10–22).

1 Samuel 9 and 10 give the details of Samuel choosing and anointing

Israel's first king, Saul. In God's providence, they met and Samuel anointed Saul (1 Samuel 10:1). God's message to Saul through Samuel was that the Spirit of God would come upon him and he would become another man (1 Samuel 10:6). In this way, God transformed Saul and prepared him to be king.

1 Samuel 13 picks up two years after Saul became the king. Israel was afraid of the multitude of Philistines who seemed about to attack. Saul was in Gilgal, and the people with him were trembling with fear (1 Samuel 13:7). Saul felt the need to offer a burnt offering to request the Lord's protection in the coming conflict. However, Samuel had told Saul to wait for him seven days (1 Samuel 13:8), and Samuel had not yet arrived.

Disregarding Samuel's instructions, Saul decided that it would be better to offer the sacrifices himself rather than to wait for Samuel (1 Samuel 13:9). This might appear reasonable. Saul was apparently seeking to honor the Lord and to ask for his protection, and the people were scattering from him (1 Samuel 13:11). However, when Samuel arrived, he made it clear that Saul had acted foolishly (1 Samuel 13:13). Saul had not obeyed the Lord. In spite of what Saul perceived as real, imminent danger, he should have obeyed and trusted God to prevail. The anxiety and concern Saul felt

over the Philistines was the product of his lack of trust in God, which led to his disobedience. And we will see that God's priority is always a trusting, obedient heart, not the outward performance of religious duty.

God still gave Saul and his son Jonathan victory over the Philistines (1 Samuel 14), and Saul fought against his enemies on every side (1 Samuel 14:47–48). He had not, however, learned the lesson of obedience to God. The events of 1 Samuel 15 show again Saul's tendency to trust his own judgment rather than to obey God. In this chapter, Israel fought against and defeated the Amalekites. God had clearly commanded Saul to destroy all of that tribe, including women, children, and animals (1 Samuel 15:3). But again Saul considered his own wisdom greater than God's wisdom. In disobedience to God's direct command, Saul kept the king and the best of the animals alive, presumably for the purpose of showing off the defeated king and making sacrifices to God (1 Samuel 15:15). Samuel confronted Saul again with God's priority, declaring plainly that God desires obedience from his people more than even the sacrifices that are meant to honor him (1 Samuel 15:22). Saul not

only disobeyed, but he also set an example for the people of Israel that God would not tolerate, trusting self as opposed to trusting God.

Saul suffered severe consequences for his disobedience. The Lord rejected him from being king over Israel (1 Samuel 15:26). The Lord promised that the kingdom would be taken from him and given to a better man, a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14, 15:28). Saul would no longer benefit from the wise counsel of Samuel, his friend and God's prophet and priest (1 Samuel 15:35). The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the Lord troubled him (1 Samuel 16:14).

As we consider the life of Saul and his failure to trust and obey God, we know that the unchanging God still demands obedience from his people. In simple terms, John 14:15 states this critical biblical principle: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." A heart that loves God will produce a life that keeps his commands—not perfectly, but characteristically. And if good fruit is lacking, the answer is not in self-effort, but examining oneself to see if he really is in the faith, turning in repentance and faith to Christ.

Historical/Apologetics Background

In order to appreciate what the people were asking when they wanted a king, it is helpful to consider the difference between a judge and a king. A judge was called by God for one main purpose—deliverance from enemies. A king, in that culture, was a sovereign over all

the affairs of the tribe or nation. A judge led by persuasion—the people followed him or disregarded him as they thought best. (The book of Judges repeats the phrase "everyone did what was right in his own eyes.") A king ruled by right—the people owed unconditional allegiance to

the king. A judge's rule was limited to accomplish a particular purpose of deliverance. A king's rule was unlimited and included succession from generation to generation. The judges, we have seen, were led by God to deliver Israel in a way that would specifically show its dependence on God alone.

Saul's anointing as Israel's king begs the question: why would God grant this desire of Israel's people for a king, when we know that the desire constituted a rejection of God? Consider that King David succeeded Saul after Saul failed. Now consider the details of God's covenant made to David—that his throne would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:16). That throne would one day be occupied by Jesus Christ, who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). Jesus is not only man, but God. He is the Word of God who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

The inescapable conclusion is that God turned the sinful desire

of Israel to his own purposes. The people rejected God's reign in favor of a man (Saul) to be king. But that rejection of God led to the fulfillment of God's plan of redemption through Jesus Christ—the final and everlasting King. How often God works in this way! Man's sins are not excused at all, but regardless of man's failures, God works out his perfect will. Joseph was sold cruelly into slavery by his brothers, but that act was used by God for good, to save the brothers later (Genesis 50:20). Peter and John were beaten for teaching about Jesus, but their faithful, courageous endurance of suffering was used to bring great boldness to the church (Acts 4:18–31). And most importantly, Jesus, the Christ, was delivered to be tortured and crucified. But that very act, the worst murder ever committed, was carried out according to God's "definite plan and foreknowledge" (Acts 2:22–23) to be the atoning sacrifice that saves God's people from their sins and brings them God's righteousness (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).



Studying God's Word

What is the root of disobedience?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Israel Rejects God

1 Samuel 8

Saul Is Chosen

1 Samuel 10:17–27

God Rejects Saul

1 Samuel 13:8–15

1 Samuel 15:1–34

John 14:15

Getting to the Root Activity

Complete the Getting to the Root worksheet.

Application

1. What do we learn about human nature from the account we studied today of Israel rejecting God as King?
2. What do we learn about God from this account?
3. How do you seek to be like the world? And how can we work together as the body of Christ to help one another put these sins to death?
4. In this lesson, we have a clear picture of the common attitude of sinners toward God—they reject God as their King. How could you use this passage of Israel rejecting God’s rule as a way to proclaim the gospel to someone who is rejecting Jesus Christ as King of kings?
5. Would you be more inclined to obey a command of God if it were found in the Bible or if you lived in Bible times and a prophet delivered a message directly to you?
6. In what ways do you tend to sympathize with Saul’s actions? Why could this be a dangerous attitude to cling to?
7. We have talked about how to get to the root of sin. How do you see this helping you?
8. What has this lesson helped you understand about God’s mercy and grace through Christ?



Prayer Requests



God Chooses David

Lesson Focus

God sent Samuel to Jesse's family in Bethlehem to anoint the next king of Israel. Jesse's least likely and youngest son, David, was the one God chose, because he was a man after God's own heart. After Samuel anointed him king, David was called into Saul's service as a musician according to God's plan.

Key Passages

1 Samuel 16:1–23; 1 Corinthians 1:26–31

What You Will Learn

- God's reason for choosing David as king.
- What David's character was like.

Memory Verse

1 John 1:8–9 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural Background

Recall in the last lesson that the first king God chose to rule Israel, King Saul, demonstrated through his disobedience that he thought himself wiser than God. Saul's heart was not right with the Lord, and because of his rebellion, God would take his kingdom away. But who would take Saul's place? God sought a man after his own heart to lead his people (1 Samuel 13:14). God found such a man in David.

God sent Samuel to anoint the man God had determined to take Saul's place. This new king would come from the household of Jesse, a man from the tribe of Judah living in Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16:1). God promised to reveal to Samuel which of Jesse's eight sons was the one whom God had selected (1 Samuel 16:3).

As Jesse presented his sons to Samuel, we see that they must have been impressive young men! Samuel immediately thought that surely God must have chosen Eliab, Jesse's oldest son, as Israel's new king (1 Samuel 16:6). But the Lord revealed that what impressed Samuel was not important to God. Eliab's good looks and height were the focus of Samuel's admiration, but the Lord sees things differently: "man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Rejecting the seven older sons, God was about to reveal Jesse's

youngest son, David, as the one to replace Saul as king. Jesse apparently didn't even think enough of David to bring him in from the fields where he was shepherding to attend this sacrifice and meeting with Samuel. And yet, because of David's heart, he was the one God had chosen. God knew that David would seek him.

David was skillful in playing music, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, and prudent in speech; the Lord was with him (1 Samuel 16:18). David was ruddy and handsome, but he was not chosen for his appearance but his heart. David was the one God intended to be the next king (1 Samuel 16:12). At David's anointing, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in a special way "from that day forward" (1 Samuel 16:13). The Spirit would give David the power he needed to accomplish God's will.

While the Spirit of God entered David, God's Spirit left Saul, and a harmful spirit overcame him, causing him much anguish (1 Samuel 16:14). In God's sovereign plan, David was called to Saul's court to comfort and soothe Saul by playing the lyre. David obediently came to serve the king, and Saul loved him and eventually made him his armor-bearer (1 Samuel 16:21).

Looking ahead in David's life, we find that he did fall into sin during his reign (e.g., his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband in

2 Samuel 11). David's heart was not perfect—no man's heart is. But David loved and trusted God rather than his own ways and judgments, as shown in his repentance over his sin (Psalm 51). This cannot be said of Saul, who rebelled against God and made excuses rather than seeking forgiveness through humble repentance.

A striking passage that shows David's heart is found in 1 Chronicles 29. Here, David exhorted Israel to give gifts to support the building of the Temple. The people responded generously, and David gave thanks in 1 Chronicles 29:10–19. David asked the Lord, “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you” (1 Chronicles 29:14). David knew that all things come from God, including the gifts they were giving for the Temple. Though he was king, David

knew that God was the true Ruler of all: “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all” (1 Chronicles 29:11).

This heart of faith and adoration is what led David to be brave in battle with Goliath: “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:37). It is this heart that led David to act honorably toward King Saul and spare his life when Saul was seeking to kill him (1 Samuel 24:12). The characteristic pattern of David's heart was to trust that the Lord was in control over all things. David served, honored, and loved the true God with all his heart. Such is a heart that is fashioned after God's own.

Historical/Apologetics Background

In 1 Samuel 16, we learn that Jesse had eight sons, with David being the youngest. Seven sons passed before Samuel and were rejected by God as the next king. Only when Samuel asked if all his sons were present did Jesse remember David, who was keeping the sheep (1 Samuel 16:10–11). The listing of only seven sons of Jesse in 1 Chronicles 2:13–15 indicates that one of the eight likely died after David's anointing. David isn't the only example of God choosing the youngest son; God often chose the younger or the least (e.g., Jacob, Joseph, Gideon) to lead.

David's first anointing was before his family. His second anointing would be before his tribe, Judah, and the third would be before the nation of Israel. When the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David, this operation of the Holy Spirit was to empower him to accomplish God's plan for Israel. As David's ascent to the throne began, so did Saul's descent (1 Samuel 16:13–14). God sovereignly allowed an evil spirit to torment Saul for the purpose of bringing David into Saul's service and eventually to his throne. This demon spirit attacked Saul from without and does not appear

to have possessed or indwelt Saul. This was not the only time God demonstrated his power and authority over demons. God used evil spirits and Satan for specific purposes in the lives of Abimelech (Judges 9:23), King Ahab (1 Kings 22:19–23), and Job (Job 1:6–12).

God's sovereignty is also seen in the fulfillment of prophecy. In Genesis 49, as Jacob was approaching death, he called his sons together and prophetically blessed them. These blessings were not just for the individual sons, but for their families, which would become the tribes of Israel. Jacob's blessing on Judah

is recorded in Genesis 49:8–12. In verse 8, Jacob said, "Your father's sons shall bow down before you," and in verse 10 he said, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah." Israel's first king, Saul, was from the tribe of Benjamin—not the tribe of Judah. We see the fulfillment of Jacob's blessing as the "scepter," or kingdom, was taken from Saul and passed to David, who was of the tribe of Judah. The Lord's intent was that a descendant from the tribe of Judah would reign permanently. And ultimately, that descendant from the tribe of Judah and the Son of David is Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior forever.

Studying God's Word

Why is Bethlehem so important?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Samuel Anoints David

1 Samuel 15:34–16:13

1 Corinthians 1:26–31

David Comes to Saul's Service

1 Samuel 16:14–23

The Bethlehem Thread Activity

The city of Bethlehem is an important part of the history of the redemption of mankind. Use the references below to begin making a chain reference. Beginning with the first reference, write each successive reference next to the prior with a symbol such as a city. That will help you remember the connection among the passages—the redemption of mankind and the city of Bethlehem.

- Ruth 2:4
 - Ruth 4:11
 - Ruth 4:21–22
 - 1 Samuel 16:1, 13
 - 1 Samuel 16:18–19
 - 1 Samuel 17:12
 - Micah 5:2
 - Luke 2:4–7
 - Luke 2:11–15
 - Matthew 2:1–6
 - John 7:40–44
1. What synonym for Bethlehem was present in the text (such as in Luke 2:4)?
 2. Why does this synonym make sense in light of the passages from this list (Hint: John 7:42)?
 3. Would it be appropriate to include Judges 12:8 or Judges 17:7 in this thread on the connection between redemption and Bethlehem? Explain.

Application

1. Ultimately, why was David chosen to be the next king of Israel?
2. As you think about the word prejudice, you might recognize that it means to pre-judge someone, usually based on the person's appearance or some outward characteristic. Why is this an ungodly attitude?
3. In what ways do you tend to judge others by their outward appearances? How can you adjust those attitudes?
4. How could the chain of references referring to Bethlehem be used as a tool to share the gospel?



Prayer Requests

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David Defeats Goliath

Lesson Focus

Goliath, the Philistine champion, challenged Saul's entire army, causing great fear. But David wasn't afraid. His faith in Israel's mighty God led him to fight Goliath. God's name was glorified when David defeated Goliath with just one stone.

Key Passage

1 Samuel 17

What You Will Learn

- How the faith of David contrasts with the fear of the Israelite soldiers.
- The source of David's confidence in battle..

Memory Verse

1 John 1:8–9 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural Background

David had great faith in God, and God used him in a mighty way to accomplish his perfect plans. David had been chosen by God to take the throne of Israel after Saul had failed to lead Israel in a God-honoring way (1 Samuel 15:10–26). Samuel had anointed David in the presence of his father, Jesse, and his older brothers, and David was now the king in waiting (1 Samuel 16:11–13).

From the time of David's anointing, the Spirit of the Lord was with him, but the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul (1 Samuel 16:13–14). God had rejected Saul and set his favor on David. In his wisdom, God had sent a harmful spirit to harass Saul, and David was brought into Saul's service to play soothing music for him. When David played his lyre, the evil spirit left Saul, and he was refreshed. David became a part of Saul's household and was appointed as his armor-bearer (1 Samuel 16:21–23).

Although Saul loved David greatly at the beginning (1 Samuel 16:21), he soon became envious and despised the talented, courageous, godly young man. Saul's jealousy toward David began in the account we are studying today—the account of David's defeat of Goliath, the Philistine from Gath (1 Samuel 17:23).

How is it that the shepherd David, the youngest of the sons of Jesse, would be the one used by God

to display trust, courage, and faith? The entire army of Israel was not able to exhibit this degree of valor against its enemy (1 Samuel 17:24). The Israelite soldiers had no courage because their confidence was not in the omnipotent God of Israel. Yet David, who had no armor or sword or status as a soldier, volunteered to go and fight the one who would dare to defy the army of the living God (1 Samuel 17:36).

And on he went—armed with the tools of a shepherd and trust in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel (1 Samuel 17:40, 17:45). David's faith was in his God, not in sword and spear. His purpose was not glory and honor for himself but a desire to display that God's power alone can save (1 Samuel 17:47). God rewarded David's faith and gave him the victory over Goliath with one perfectly aimed stone to the giant's forehead. With their champion dead, the Philistines fled, and the Israelites pursued them (1 Samuel 17:49–52).

As mentioned earlier, when Samuel anointed David as king, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. The Spirit gave David the strength, courage, confidence, and trust to defend Israel against its enemies in the name of the Lord. His conquests made in the name of his sovereign and all-powerful God brought him honor among the people. This increasing

popularity provoked Saul's jealousy and hatred (1 Samuel 18:5–11). Saul became consumed with this vendetta and sought to kill David on multiple occasions over many years.

Throughout history, we see God using imperfect people to accomplish his plans. While the entire

Israelite army feared one Philistine giant, a God-fearing young man came forward to kill the enemy. From the family line of this young man, David, would come the Messiah (Jesus Christ) to provide forgiveness, mercy, and grace to sinners—and the promise of eternal life.

Historical/Apologetics Background

Even though David was the youngest son of Jesse, he was not small and frail by any means. The common depictions of David and Goliath in Sunday school materials, coloring books, animated movies, and even paintings are of a tiny young boy facing a giant man. While this makes for a good “story,” it is not what the Bible presents. In 1 Samuel 16:18 one of Saul's servants gives a description of David some time before his encounter with Goliath:

One of the young men answered, “Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the LORD is with him.”

This description portrays David as a valiant young man who was quite capable of fighting.

Another point often raised is the description of David trying to wear Saul's armor. We know that Saul was a head taller than the average Israelite (1 Samuel 9:2). Many people assume that David refused to wear Saul's armor into battle because it was much too big for him (1 Samuel

17:38–39). Looking carefully at the text, however, David said that he had not “tested” the armor—he was not comfortable fighting in gear he had not trained in. Also, Saul would not suggest David wear his armor if it was much too big for him. To do so would put David at a disadvantage. We need to purge the little-boy image and have a biblical perspective of the young man, David, who was probably in his late teens when he faced Goliath.

Although David was no undersized boy, he might have appeared so next to Goliath. This warrior from Gath was probably a descendant of the giants who caused the 10 spies to be fearful of entering the Promised Land. Like those spies, the warriors of Israel did not trust God to fight for them, and they stood in fear of a mere man. The details of Goliath are indeed impressive—he stood 9 feet 9 inches tall, his coat of mail weighed 125 pounds, and his spearhead weighed 15 pounds. There was not a man among the Israelites in his own strength who could defeat Goliath.

We should note that there is some debate about Goliath's height due to the textual variants in ancient manuscripts. Most English translations

follow the Masoretic Text in listing his height at “six cubits and a span” (approximately 9 feet 9 inches). However, the NET Bible puts Goliath at “close to seven feet tall.” The reason for the discrepancy is that the Masoretic Text differs from some ancient texts, including the Septuagint and an ancient manuscript found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which list Goliath’s height as “four cubits and a span” (approximately 6 feet 9 inches). More than nine feet definitely qualifies as a giant, but even a man approximately 6 feet, 9 inches in David’s time, when the average height was around approximately 5 feet 4 inches, might have been considered a giant.

Over the years, many falsified photos have circulated showing giant skeletons being excavated around the world. Unfortunately, some well-meaning Christians have used these to “prove” that someone as tall as Goliath could have lived in the Middle East. We must remember that we can trust God’s Word when it refers to giants, and we should not start with outside sources to demonstrate the Bible’s trustworthiness. If these archaeological finds (were they even real) could prove the Bible to be true, then we’d no longer be looking to the Bible as the authority. We must always look to Scripture as our ultimate authority.

Studying God’s Word

Who killed Goliath?

Who Killed Goliath? Activity

The story of David and Goliath is familiar to many, but few actually know the true account of the events. Answer the following questions without any outside help, and don’t change your answers once they are recorded.

1. Who killed Goliath?

2. Who was leading the Israelite army?

3. How old was David during this battle?

4. What was Goliath's challenge to the Israelites?
5. Why didn't David wear any armor?
6. What weapon did David take into battle? Draw a picture of that weapon.
7. What weapon was used to kill Goliath?
8. Who is the hero of this section of Scripture?
9. What is the most important message of this passage of Scripture?
10. What other details do you recall about the passage?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Goliath the Champion

1 Samuel 17:1–16

David the Champion

1 Samuel 17:17–58

Hebrews 11:32–34

Application

1. What do we learn from David about placing our faith in God?
2. In what way have you seen the importance of looking carefully at the biblical text, as we studied this passage today?
3. Which of the characters in this account do you most identify with?
4. What is the difference between looking at this passage the way we have done today versus using David as an example of a brave person whom we can try to emulate?



Prayer Requests



Jonathan Warns David

Lesson Focus

David and Jonathan (Saul's son) became close friends. God gave David success in everything he did, which made Saul jealous. Saul tried to kill David several times, but God protected him, and Jonathan warned him when he needed to flee.

Key Passages

1 Samuel 18, 19:1–10, 20:1–17, 20:30–42

What You Will Learn

- What David and Jonathan's friendship was like.
- How Saul was jealous of David.

Memory Verse

1 John 1:8–9 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural Background

The account in 1 Samuel 18 picks up right after David's victory over the Philistine champion, Goliath. The Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, and King Saul inquired about David's background, likely because he had promised his daughter in marriage to the victor and wanted to know his lineage. David would enter Saul's service and no longer return home. He would also meet Jonathan and start a long-lasting friendship based on mutual love and trust in the Lord. Their covenant friendship demonstrated true, selfless love. Jonathan gave David his robe, armor, and weapons, which were symbols of his princely status. It is likely that Jonathan was recognizing David would be the next king in his place.

While David and Jonathan's friendship grew, so did Saul's jealousy of David. In whatever David did, God gave him success, and the people loved him. David was made commander of a thousand and married Saul's younger daughter, Michal. But Saul's jealousy turned to violence when David was playing the lyre in his presence and Saul tried to kill him with a spear (1 Samuel 18:10–11). Warning David to hide, Jonathan dared to speak to his father and convince him to spare David's life. Saul listened to his plea and promised he would not kill David (1 Samuel 19:1–7). However,

this promise didn't last long. After another spear-throwing attempt on David's life, Saul commanded his messengers to watch David's house to kill him in the morning (1 Samuel 19:9–11). But David's wife Michal helped him escape their house and stalled for time by claiming David was sick. Her deception using a teraphim in bed to deceive the messengers into thinking it was David is reminiscent of Rachel's theft of her father's teraphim and deception to cover it up (1 Samuel 19:12–17; Genesis 31:19, 31:34–35). Both women deceived their fathers out of loyalty to their husbands.

David fled to Samuel at Ramah, and they went together to Naioth, where a company of prophets, led by Samuel, were prophesying. The messengers Saul sent to capture David were unable to fulfill their mission because the Spirit of God came upon them and they prophesied (1 Samuel 19:18–21). After his third group of messengers failed to reach David, Saul went himself. But he, too, was overcome by the Spirit of God and prophesied, which enabled David to escape.

David met up with Jonathan and asked why Saul continued to seek his life, but Jonathan thought his father would tell him if that were so. David realized that Saul was keeping his plans from Jonathan because of their friendship. David came up

with a plan to ascertain if Saul was still determined to kill him. Jonathan would go to the new moon meal while David remained hidden. When Saul asked where David was, Jonathan would reply that David had gone to Bethlehem to attend a sacrifice with his family. If Saul was fine with David's absence, they would know David's life was safe; but if Saul was angry, they would know Saul still wanted him dead (1 Samuel 20:5-8). Jonathan would then report Saul's response to David. Before Jonathan returned to the city, he asked David to show kindness to his descendants when God made him king and cut off his enemies. David promised, and the friends parted.

At the new moon celebration, Saul did not ask about David's absence until the second night. When Jonathan told him David had gone to Bethlehem, Saul was furious. He insulted Jonathan and told him that

he would never have the kingdom as long as David lived. Then he threw a spear at Jonathan and missed. After this, Jonathan knew that his father was determined to kill his friend David (1 Samuel 20:27-33).

Jonathan then had to warn his friend without drawing attention. He took his bow and arrows and a boy to the field in the morning to look like he was going to practice. As he shot the arrows and called to the boy that the arrows were beyond him, he was actually communicating with David, warning him to flee. Jonathan sent the unsuspecting boy back to the city, and then David came out from hiding. The friends wept, renewed the promise of their friendship, and parted ways (1 Samuel 20:41-42). Like Michal, Jonathan chose to be loyal to David over his father, Saul, who was sinning by seeking to kill an innocent man out of jealousy.

Historical/Apologetics Background

In today's culture, marriage and gender are being redefined by those who reject God's Word. Homosexual and lesbian relationships are granted equal status as heterosexual ones, and the push for acceptance of alternative lifestyles has inundated television, movies, school textbooks, and the church. In an attempt to justify homosexual behavior, some even claim that the Bible condones it, and one of the passages twisted for this purpose is the friendship of David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:1-4). However, the love described between David and Jonathan is a friendship,

not a sexual kind of love. David clearly loved Bathsheba and his wives, but his covenant friendship with Jonathan was rooted in both men's love and service for the Lord.

By looking at the whole of Scripture, we see that homosexual behavior goes completely against God's design for human relationships. The basis for marriage is found in Genesis 1-2 when God created male and female and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply. This command can only be fulfilled through heterosexual marriage, and the male and female roles in the family

complement each other biologically, spiritually, socially, and emotionally. Jesus himself referred to Genesis when questioned about marriage (Matthew 19:1–12; Mark 10:1–12).

Old Testament commands clearly state that homosexual behavior is an abomination (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13), and God’s judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as Israel’s attack on the tribe of Benjamin, were initiated by the great wickedness, including sodomy, in those places (see Genesis 19 and Judges 19–20). In the New Testament, homosexual behavior and other sexual sins are clearly condemned as punishment for rejecting God and are a sign of unbelievers (Romans 1:24–28; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, lived in a perfect world where there was no sin. But now, after the Fall, sinful desires and behaviors

characterize mankind. Because of our fallen nature, all people are born as slaves to sin and have desires contrary to God’s law (Romans 6:15–21; Galatians 5:16–21). Some people report that they experience same-sex attraction, but this does not make it normal or moral. People also experience other sinful desires (e.g., greed, improper heterosexual desires, covetousness, envy, etc.). All of our desires and behaviors must be evaluated by God’s Word.

Christians who condone a homosexual lifestyle (or any sinful lifestyle) are rejecting the truth given in Scripture. It is not hateful to share the truth in love with them. Those trapped in the lie that they can’t control their sexual desires can experience God’s forgiveness, grace, and power to live in victory over their sin. Let us be faithful and courageous to share this message in love.

Studying God’s Word

How dangerous is a little jealousy?

 Take notes as you study the following passages.

An Intimate Bond

1 Samuel 17:53–18:30

Saul Pursues David

1 Samuel 19:1–10

1 Samuel 20:1–17

1 Samuel 20:30–42

Jonathan Loved David Activity

When you read a phrase like this title, what is the first thing that comes to your mind? In our current cultural climate, many people will connect the statement to some expression of homosexuality. But that simply reflects the way our culture influences our thinking. Examine the following passages and interact with the questions as we try to understand the intimate relationship between these two men and frame our thinking around what the Bible teaches rather than what the culture offers.

1. Read 1 Samuel 18:3, 20:17, and 2 Samuel 1:25–26.
 - a. What characterized the relationship between David and Jonathan?

b. How do these verses relate to Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 22:39?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 and answer the following:

a. What sexual sins are listed in this passage?

b. Which of the sins listed in this passage are you guilty of?

c. Does homosexuality have any different judgment than the other sins listed in this passage?

d. What hope does this passage offer?

3. Based on what you have read, is there any justification for the claims that David and Jonathan were involved in a homosexual relationship?

4. How could you respond to someone who made the claims that Jonathan's giving his clothes to David, the statements of mutual love, the covenant between the two, and the kiss mentioned in 20:41 amount to a clear case that the two men were involved in a homosexual relationship?

5. While Scripture is clear that homosexual behavior is a sin (there are both Old and New Testament passages on the matter), we Christians often elevate it to a special status above all other sins. How can we respond in a way that will be helpful to the individual if someone admits that they have committed this sin?
6. How can we keep our own prejudices from causing us to unrighteously judge those who sin in ways that we find “worse” than our own sins?

Application

1. How does this make Jonathan a type of Christ?
2. What do you think accounts for the difference in Saul and Jonathan’s attitudes toward David?
3. Have you ever battled the sin of jealousy? How does Saul’s example help you recognize the gravity of this sinful attitude?
4. How can the command to “rejoice with those who rejoice” (Romans 12:15) help us to avoid jealousy?

5. How does your attitude toward others under your leadership (in whatever context) compare to Jonathan's treatment of David? Do you seek to encourage people to excel beyond you or subvert their progress so that they don't overtake you?

6. In what way has the description of the relationship between David and Jonathan challenged your views of what a healthy and God-honoring relationship between members of the same gender looks like?

7. As you consider your attitude toward the sin of homosexuality, or even other sexual sins, do you need to make any adjustments so that your thinking is more in line with God's mind as revealed in Scripture?



Prayer Requests



Saul Hunts David

Lesson Focus

Saul's jealousy led him to hunt David and attempt to destroy him, but God protected David and his men. David had several opportunities to kill Saul, but he chose to trust God and wait for his timing to receive the kingdom.

Key Passages

1 Samuel 24, 26; Romans 12:14–21

What You Will Learn

- How Saul pursued David.
- How David responded with mercy to Saul's hatred.

Memory Verse

1 John 1:8–9 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural Background

After Jonathan warned David to flee from Saul and the city of Gibeah, David began a journey that would have him crisscrossing the country, even venturing into Moab and Philistia to escape Saul's mad hunt. David's first stop at the priests' city of Nob enabled him to get bread and Goliath's sword from the priest, Ahimelech, who was unaware that David was no longer a trusted commander and son-in-law to King Saul. Ahimelech, a great grandson of Eli, gave David and his men the consecrated bread that was for the priests. Unfortunately, Saul's chief herdsman, Doeg the Edomite, saw David receiving supplies and would later report this to Saul. Saul reacted with anger and violence when he thought the priests were loyal to David and had them killed (1 Samuel 22:11–19). Saul's own servants refused to strike the priests, but Doeg obeyed Saul's command to destroy the city, which fulfilled the curse God pronounced on the descendants of Eli (see 1 Samuel 2:31). Only one priest, Abiathar, escaped and told David what happened. Abiathar served the house of David until Solomon had him removed from the priesthood (1 Kings 2:26–27).

After leaving Nob, David fled to the Philistine city of Gath, Goliath's hometown. The servants of King Achish recognized David as an Israelite commander, so David feared

for his life and feigned insanity to be sent away (1 Samuel 21:10–15). After escaping from Gath, David went to a cave in Adullam where his family and a band of disgruntled men gathered to him. David then took his parents to Moab for their safety. David and his men saved the city of Keilah from the Philistines, but God warned him not to stay there. David hid in strongholds in the wilderness while Saul continued to hunt for him (1 Samuel 23:14).

Jonathan visited and encouraged David in the Lord, but then the Ziphites told Saul of David's location. While David and his men were fleeing from Saul on a mountain, Saul was closing in on them, probably with his men divided into two groups to surround him. Again, we see God's providential protection of David when a messenger arrived to tell Saul that the Philistines had made a raid, forcing Saul to give up his pursuit of David and leave (1 Samuel 23:26–28).

David's first opportunity to get revenge occurred in a cave at the oasis of Engedi. When Saul entered the cave to relieve himself, he was unaware that David and his men were hidden farther back inside the cave. Ignoring the advice of his men to kill Saul, David cut off a piece of Saul's robe and then later showed it to Saul to prove he could have taken his life but chose not to (1 Samuel

24:8–15). Saul showed remorse for his actions and returned home.

Before Saul's next attempt to capture David, the faithful prophet Samuel died and was mourned by all of Israel (1 Samuel 25:1). David also met Abigail, the wise wife of foolish Nabal, who refused to give supplies to David's men. Abigail appealed to David and talked him out of taking vengeance on Nabal's household. David listened to her and left with the supplies she gave, and God punished Nabal with death (1 Samuel 25:37–38). David asked Abigail to be his wife, and she agreed. David's other wife, Ahinoam of Jezreel, is also mentioned at the end of 1 Samuel 25.

Reneging on his word, Saul again pursued David when the Ziphites came and gave his location. Saul, Abner (the commander of the army), and 3,000 men of Israel went into the wilderness and camped on a hill. David's spies reported their location,

and David went with his nephew Abishai into the camp of Saul. Because God caused all of Saul's camp to sleep deeply, David and Abishai made it to the king undetected. When Abishai wanted to kill Saul with his spear, David refused. He understood that Saul's death was in God's hands, not his, and it would be a sin to kill God's anointed ruler. Instead, they took Saul's spear and jar of water (1 Samuel 26:7–12). After climbing a safe distance from Saul's camp, David called to Abner and reprimanded him for failing to protect the king. He showed the spear and jar to prove that he had once again been given the opportunity to kill Saul but hadn't (1 Samuel 26:13–16). Saul said he'd sinned and wanted David to return, but David knew better than to trust Saul's word. He returned Saul's spear and went on his way, knowing he'd done what was right by sparing Saul's life.

Historical/Apologetics Background

Engedi is an oasis in the midst of the wilderness that surrounds the Dead Sea. It has fresh water, plants, and limestone caves. It was an area that David used to supply his group and to hide from Saul. Today, Engedi is a nature preserve where visitors can see waterfalls, wildlife, vegetation, and caves like the ones where David and his men hid.

David made some mistakes during this difficult period of fleeing from Saul. He lied to Ahimelech about his standing with Saul and reason for needing supplies, but he

recognized his responsibility in what happened to the priests because of his lie. He also failed to trust God for protection when he fled to Gath and instead relied on his performance as a madman. However, David showed great faith in God and mercy to Saul on two occasions when he could have taken vengeance. David trusted that God would deal with Saul in his timing and that he should not sin by killing the man anointed to rule Israel. The pressure from his men would have been tough, but David restrained them and showed himself

to be more righteous than Saul, who continued to hunt him.

We can see David's faith and reliance on the Lord by reading the psalms he wrote during this difficult time of his life. Psalm 34, which may have been written when David acted insane in Gath, says, "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles" (v. 6). Psalm 52 was written when Doeg the Edomite reported that David had been to see Ahimelech at Nob. David wrote, "I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever" (Psalm 52:8).

Shortly after that, he wrote Psalm 54 when the Ziphites gave his location to Saul. His plea to God for help and deliverance is a blessing to us today. Many psalms refer to God as a fortress and rock just like the strongholds David sought for protection from Saul (see Psalm 18:1-2 and 31:3-5). By choosing to focus on the Lord in times of trouble, David stands as an example to all believers to cry out to the Lord, wait patiently for him, trust him, and praise him for deliverance.

Studying God's Word

How can you do good to someone who seeks your harm?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

David Trusts God

1 Samuel 23:15-18

1 Samuel 24:1-22

Another Chance

1 Samuel 26:1–25

Romans 12:14–21

Psalms of Distress Activity

David was a man with many failings. As he faced the challenges of being hunted by his king and father-in-law, David was prone to lying and deceiving in ways that do not demonstrate his trust in God. But at other times, he makes explicit statements about trusting in God's plans and timing. Alongside the historical accounts, many of the psalms are based on events in the life of David.

Read through Psalm 34 and consider how David acted insane before Achish (Abimelech) in 1 Samuel 21:10–15.

Read through Psalm 54 and consider the people disclosing David's hiding place in 1 Samuel 23:19–24 and 26:1–2.

Read through Psalm 57 and consider David hiding in a cave from Saul in 1 Samuel 22:1–5.

1. How do the psalms differ from the accounts in 1 Samuel?

2. How do you explain the differences in the historical accounts and the psalms? Is one true and the other false?

3. Would you have been able to identify the specific events tied to these psalms without the title at the beginning of each psalm?

Application

1. We know that Saul was driven by jealousy. Why is jealousy such a dangerous sin to indulge?

2. Have you ever sought revenge? How did that work out in the end?

3. Have you ever made a concerted effort to love an enemy? How did that work out in the end?

4. How do the examples of David and Jesus give us a clear perspective on how God desires us to live our lives?

5. What if we fail and lash out against someone in revenge or allow ourselves to get caught up in attitudes of jealousy? How can we find hope in our failures?

6. How does the historical connection to the several psalms we looked at (and there are others) add dimension and a deeper understanding of Scripture?
7. How does the fact that the Bible records both the sinful failures of Saul and David as well as their God-honoring acts and attitudes support the authority and authenticity of Scripture?



Prayer Requests
