

# THE KINGS

Date: 3.17.23 | Title: Saul: The Failed King | Scripture: 1 Samuel 13-15

## LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

### Middle School Students

The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus. God deserves respect, obedience, and honor. God wants us to live for His glory. God commands people to obey Him. People can acknowledge and follow God's authority in their lives.

### High School Students

The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus. God deserves respect, obedience, and honor. God wants us to live for His glory. God commands people to obey Him. People can acknowledge and follow God's authority in their lives. God wants us to share his messages with those around us.



### MEMORY VERSE

"But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them."

1 Samuel 8:6-7

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## BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

King Saul certainly looked the part of a king. He was tall, handsome and from a good family. He started out humbly, expressing disbelief that Samuel would anoint him, but eventually became prideful and arrogant which led to a life of destruction. Although chosen directly by God and initially zealous for the Lord, Saul is easily moved by circumstances and his desire to make himself known. Saul reigned for around 40 years, but like Israel, often did what was right in his own eyes instead of following the word of the Lord through Samuel (Judges 17:6, 21:25).

During his time as king, Saul makes several momentous mistakes, reflecting his lack of trust in God. Saul takes credit for other people's victories- even those of his own son Jonathan- promoting himself over the nation he serves (1 Samuel 13:1-4). He compounds his error by carrying out a burnt offering on his own, instead of waiting for Samuel to fulfill his God-given role as priest (1 Samuel 10:8 and 13:8-14). Right after the sacrifices are offered, Samuel arrives and rebukes Saul for failing to obey instructions. Saul makes excuses, blaming Samuel for not arriving on time and appealing to what seems reasonable: his troops were leaving, and the Philistines were preparing for battle. Saul clothes his actions in religious fervor: He says, "...I had not sought the favor of the Lord, so I forced myself and offered the burnt offering" (13:12). Saul makes excuses because he knows what he has done is wrong. Saul tends to be moved by circumstances and to rely on religious ritual to gain God's favor rather than trusting and obeying the word of the Lord. Saul fails to acknowledge Samuel's role as the divine messenger and to listen to the word of God. Instead of admitting that he is motivated by fear and has disobeyed Samuel and therefore God, Saul acts as if what he did was holy. This kind of upside-down perverseness leads Samuel to say that Saul's dynasty will not continue (13:13-14). Saul shows that he is not "a man after God's own heart" (13:14). Samuel tells Saul that his days as king are now numbered because "the Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14).

Saul's foolishness as a leader is on display in chapter 14, standing in remarkable contrast to the courage and wisdom of his son Jonathan. Saul cares more about his reputation than about the people under his care. At one point, Israel's army is reduced to only 600 men. While Saul is sitting around waiting for something to happen, Jonathan takes his armor bearer, and bravely attacks the Philistines, recognizing that "nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few".

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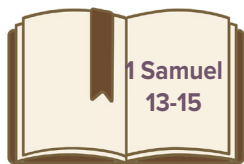
## BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

God gives the two men victory (1 Samuel 14:6-14). The duo sets an example, inspiring the rest of the army to follow them into battle and “the Lord saved Israel that day” (14:23). Saul in the meantime, issues a rash and senseless order, forbidding any of the men to eat until all the enemies are defeated, under penalty of death (14:24). The men have been forced to battle all day without eating, so everyone is beyond exhausted. Jonathan, out on his raid, hasn’t heard the king’s order, and stops to refresh himself with some wild honey. When Saul finds out what Jonathan has done, he tells him “You’re a dead man.” Jonathan, upon hearing his father’s prohibition, recognizes that the victory would have been greater if Saul had not deprived Israel of food (14:29-30). The people stand up for Jonathan, recognizing that his leadership has won the day, but Saul’s jealousy and tactical ineptitude betray a stunning indifference toward anyone’s welfare but his own (14:39-45).

In Chapter 15, Samuel tells Saul that when he goes to battle against the Amalekites, Saul is to “utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them” (1 Samuel 15:3). No exceptions- they are to be wiped out completely (15:1-6). God intends to use Israel to punish the Amalekites for an old injustice, an ambush in Moses’s day that led to the slaughter of women, children, and the elderly (Deut. 25:17-19). They are a cancer in the Promised Land, and God promises to cut them out completely. Saul thinks he knows better than God. Saul defeats the Amalekites but fails to carry out all that the Lord demanded: “Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of all the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction” (15:9). The Lord reveals to Samuel what Saul has done and indicates that he regrets appointing Saul as king (15:11, 35). Samuel grieves for Israel and cries out all night in prayer, but when he travels to see Saul the next morning, Saul has the nerve to tell him that he has obeyed God’s commandment. Samuel tells Saul that God delights more in obedience than in burnt offerings. Saul erects a monument to himself (15:12) and claims that he has done what the Lord instructed (15:13). Samuel will have none of it, asking why then he hears “this bleating of sheep...and the lowing of the oxen” (15:14). Saul excuses his disobedience again with spiritual reasoning. They “spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God” (15:15). Samuel stops Saul short, reminding him that the Lord has chosen him to be king over Israel and he has sent him on a mission to destroy Amalek entirely (15:17-19). Saul continues to rationalize, insisting that he has obeyed, and that what was spared would be given to the Lord as a sacrifice (15:21-22). What Saul does not recognize or admit is that he has violated the Lord’s command (15:22-23). Finally, Saul acknowledges his sin and the true reason for his disobedience comes to light: He fears people rather than fearing the Lord (15:24). God is fed up with Saul and this is the last straw, so Samuel proclaims his rejection. Samuel informs Saul, “You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!” (1 Samuel 15:26) Just as he “rejected the word of the Lord,” so too the Lord rejects him “from being king” (15:23, 26, 28). Saul will keep his crown for the time being, but God will not be with him, and God’s replacement is waiting in the wings. Israel was victorious, but because of Saul’s actions, the Amalekites would continue to plague Israel for years to come. Samuel has nothing more to do with Saul, and he mourns for him the rest of his life (1 Samuel 15:35).

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## LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY



**Tell the story:** Use the Background Info for Leaders to help teach 1 Samuel 13-15. “The Rise and Fall of King Saul” is a partial re-telling in The Biggest Story Bible Storybook and “King Saul” is a partial re-telling in The Tiny Truths Illustrated Bible. These two books provide good illustrations of today’s text. The Message version of the Bible provides a good teaching summary for this text.

TELL  
THE  
STORY



**Re-tell the Bible Story:** put events in order, draw a comic strip, build it with blocks or playdough, act it out, etc.

**Attributes of God:** Use the attributes of God list and determine the characteristics of God that we see in today’s story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true, change the way we live in Christ?



**Share the GOSPEL:** God made Saul king, but King Saul did not obey God. God sent His Son, Jesus, to be king over everything. King Jesus obeyed God perfectly and died so we can be forgiven.

Put the events in order, draw a comic strip, build it with blocks or playdough, act it out, etc...

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## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

**ATTENTIVE** - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

**COMPASSIONATE** - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

**CREATOR** - God made everything. He is uncreated.

**DELIVERER** - God rescues and saves his children.

**ETERNAL** - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

**FAITHFUL** - God always keeps his promises.

**GENEROUS** - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

**GLORIOUS** - God displays His greatness and worth.

**GOOD** - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

**HOLY** - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

**IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING** - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

**INCOMPREHENSIBLE** - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

**INFINITE** - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

**JEALOUS** - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

**JUST** - god is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

**LOVING** - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

**MERCIFUL** - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

**OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY** - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.

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## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

**OMNIPRESENT** - God is fully present everywhere.

**OMNISCIENT** - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

**PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING** - God is untiring and bears with His children.

**PROVIDER** - God meets the needs of his children.

**REFUGE** - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

**RIGHTEOUS** - God is always good and right.

**SELF-EXISTENT** - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

**SELF-SUFFICIENT** - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

**SOVEREIGN** - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

**TRANSCENDENT** - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

**TRUTHFUL** - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

**WISE** - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

**WORTHY** - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

**WRATHFUL** - God hates all unrighteousness.

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## QUESTIONS TO REBUILD THE STORY

**“Storying” Questions:** As you ask these questions, have your students support their answers by sharing evidence they took from Scripture.

1. What did Samuel tell Saul to do in 1 Samuel 10:8?
2. What did Saul do instead in 1 Samuel 13:8-9?
3. What were Saul’s excuses in 1 Samuel 13:11-12?
4. What consequences will Saul have according to 1 Samuel 13:13-14? Why?
5. What contrasts does 1 Samuel 14 show between Saul and his son Jonathan?
6. What rash vow does Saul lay in 1 Samuel 14:24? How does this affect the battle? How does this affect his relationship with Jonathan? In what way does it show Saul’s lack of wisdom and tactical planning?
7. In what way does Saul fail miserably in Chapter 15?
8. What are his excuses for his defiance?
9. What does the Lord tell Samuel in 1 Samuel 15:10? How does Samuel respond in 1 Samuel 15:10-13?
10. What has Saul done when Samuel gets there to speak to him?
11. What sin does Saul finally admit in 1 Samuel 15:24?
12. What does Samuel want Saul to do in 1 Samuel 15:30?
13. Who finishes the job the Lord told Saul to do in 1 Samuel 15:33?
14. What is the Lord’s emotion toward Saul in 1 Samuel 15:35?
15. In what ways do you think we compromise God’s instructions?
16. Has God wanted you to do something that you were tempted to do only halfheartedly? How did you respond?
17. Are there any areas of your life where you only partially obey God? What do you think God would have you do now?
18. What opportunities do we miss when we disobey God? In what ways does God bless those who fully obey?

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## PRAYER PROMPTS

God, thank you for being the perfect king over us! Help us to trust and follow You alone! We acknowledge that Your ways are higher than our ways and that we need to be patient and realize that you are sovereign over all and we can rely on your timing in all things.

## IF TIME ALLOWS:

**Bible Skills Practice:** Encourage your students to not only know the order of the books of the bible but also the different divisions they come in.

**The Torah:** Genesis - Deuteronomy | **History:** Joshua - Esther | **Poetry:** Job - Song of Solomon | **Major Prophets:** Isaiah - Daniel | **Minor Prophets:** Hosea - Malachi | **Gospels:** Matthew - John | **Acts** | **Paul's Letter:** Romans - Philemon | **General Letters:** Hebrews - Jude | **Revelation**

## MISSIONS EMPHASIS:

For the month of March through Easter, our church will be collecting money for the Annie Armstrong Easter offering. This offering goes to fund missionaries in North America. Please encourage your group to collect change for the giving funnel in the lobby.

## REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

Work on memorizing this week's verse with the students in your group. You can use the first letter of each word in the verse to help with this. For example, the unit verse would look like this:

**BT TDSW TSGU AKTJUASPTTLATLSTSOTVOTPIATTSTYFTHNRYBTHRMFBKOT - 1 Samuel 8:6-7**



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## Application Questions

### LOOK UPWARD



- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

### LOOK INWARD



- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

### LOOK AROUND



- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is god inviting you to do differently in your relationships?

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## Application Questions

### LOOK OUTWARD

- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and in the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

### LOOK FORWARD

- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?