

# SAUL BECAME KING

1 Samuel 8 - 12

## STRUCTURE

**Key-persons:** Samuel and Saul

**Key-locations:** Mizpah, Gibeah, Jabesh, and Gilgal

### Key-repetitions:

- Israelites wanted a king just like the other nations (1 Sam 8:5, 20).
- Samuel warned them of what a king would do: he would make soldiers out of sons (1 Sam 8:12); he would make forced laborers out of sons (1 Sam 8:12); he would take their daughters (1 Sam 8:13); he would take their property (1 Sam 8:14); he would make them his slaves (1 Sam 8:17); they would cry out in desperation because of their king (1 Sam 8:18).
- Saul became king: anointed in private by Samuel (1 Sam 10:1); at Mizpah anointed before the people (1 Sam 10:17-26); kingship confirmed at Gilgal (1 Sam 11:14-15).
- Samuel pronounced God's message: to the people (1 Sam 10:17-19, 25; 12:1-25); to Saul (1 Sam 9:20; 10:1-8).
- Rejected: Samuel's sons rejected their father's ways (1 Sam 8:3, 5); the people didn't reject Samuel, they rejected God as their king (1 Sam 8:7); some troublemakers rejected Saul (1 Sam 10:27); Samuel warned the people not to reject God (1 Sam 12:21, 25).
- Positive things about Saul: he was handsome and tall (1 Sam 9:2); he was the best of the Israelites (1 Sam 9:2; 10:24); he was humble (1 Sam 9:21; 10:21-22); injustice made him angry (1 Sam 11:6); he didn't seek revenge (1 Sam 11:12-13).

### Key-attitudes:

- Israelites' desire to have a king like other nations.
- Samuel's reluctance to give the people a king.
- Samuel's concern for the people.
- Saul pleased the Lord, Samuel, and the people.
- Positive attitude about Samuel.
- Saul's humility.
- Saul's anger at injustice.

### Initial-situation:

Samuel was a judge who led the Israelites to have victory over their enemies.

### Initial-problem:

Samuel became an old man; and he appointed his sons as judges, but his sons were dishonest.

**Final-situation:**

Samuel gave a farewell speech to Israel and warned them, "If you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will be thrown out. As for me, I'll not sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I'll teach you what is good and right."

**BIBLE STORY****Israelites Want a King**

Prophet Samuel became an old man, and he appointed his sons as judges. But his sons sought dishonest gain, took bribes, and were dishonest in their judging.

Older leaders of Israel told Samuel, "You're an old man; your sons don't follow your ways. Appoint a king to lead us, just like all the other nations."

The Lord told Samuel, "Give them what they want. They're not rejecting you, but they've rejected me as their king. Let them have their way, but warn them about the way kings operate and warn what they will get from a king."

Samuel told the people, "Your king will take your sons and make soldiers of them, or he'll put them to forced labor on his farms. Your king will take your daughters. Your king will take your fields and vineyards. You yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you'll cry out in desperation because of the king you have chosen, but the Lord won't answer you."

The people answered, "No! We want a king over us. Then we'll be just like all the other nations. Our king will rule us, lead us and fight our battles."

The Lord told Samuel, "Do what they say. Give them a king" (1 Sam 8:1-21).

**Samuel and Saul**

Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, passed through the hill country searching for his father's lost donkeys. Prophet Samuel saw Saul entering the town of Zuph. Samuel took a flask of olive oil, poured it on Saul's head, kissed him and said, "The Lord has anointed you leader over his people" (1 Sam 9:1 - 10:2).

Prophet Samuel summoned the Israelites to Mizpah. Samuel told the Israelites that God had chosen Saul of the tribe of Benjamin to be their king. Saul hid among the baggage. The people found Saul and brought him out. Saul was a head taller than anyone else. Samuel said to the people, "The man the Lord has chosen is the best. There's no one like him in the whole country!"

The people shouted, "Long live the king!"

Samuel explained to the people the rights and duties of the king. Then Samuel sent everyone to their homes. Saul went to his home in Gibeah, accompanied by some brave men.

Some troublemakers said, "How can this fellow save us?" But Saul kept silent (1 Sam 10:17-27).

**Beginning of Saul's Kingship**

A month later the king of the Ammonites went with his army and surrounded the city of Jabesh. The men of Jabesh pleaded, "Make a treaty with us, and we'll serve you."

The king replied, "I'll make a treaty with you on one condition: that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you."

Jabesh's town leaders replied, "Give us seven days so we can send messengers throughout Israel; if no one comes to rescue us, we'll accept your terms."

Messengers came to Saul's place in Gibeah and reported what the Ammonites had threatened to do to the men of Jabesh. The Spirit of God came in power upon Saul and he burned with anger. Saul took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, "The same thing will be done to the oxen of anyone who doesn't follow Saul and Samuel." Saul gathered three hundred and thirty thousand soldiers.

The next day Saul separated his men into three divisions. Before sunrise, they broke into the Ammonites' camp and killed them until noon. Those who survived scattered (1 Sam 11:1-11).

People then told Samuel, "Bring those who didn't want Saul as king and we'll kill them."

Saul said, "No one shall be executed today. The Lord rescued Israel today." All the people went to Gilgal and reconfirmed Saul as king (1 Sam 11:12-15).

Samuel gave a farewell speech to Israel, "If you and the king worship and obey the Lord and keep his commands, good! But if you don't obey the Lord, the Lord will fight against you, as he did against your fathers. You committed a great evil asking for a king. But don't turn away from the Lord. Serve the Lord with all your heart. Don't turn away after useless idols. Be warned: if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will be thrown out. As for me, I'll not sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I'll teach you what is good and right" (1 Sam 12:14-25).

### GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story?                  | 5. How did the characters face their problems?                                       |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems?  |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story?                  | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face?                     | 8. What does the story tell about God?   |

### SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Israelites want a king?
2. Why was Samuel reluctant to give the Israelites a king?
3. What experiences did Saul go through to become king of Israel?
4. How did Saul channel his anger for good?
5. Why does anger have the potential for both evil and good?
6. What were some of the positive things about Saul at the beginning of his kingship?
7. As God's spokesperson, what warnings did Samuel give to the people and to King Saul?
8. How do those warnings apply to us today?

9. Why did Samuel commit himself to pray for the Israelites even when he disagreed with their demand for a king?
10. How should we treat people who are making decisions that we consider wrong?

### LIFE-LESSONS

1. **God's people are headed for disaster when they want to be like unbelievers.** God called Israel to be a holy nation, separate and unique among all others (Lev 20:26). However, Israel's desire was in opposition to God's original plan for them. Israel wanted to have a king so they would be like other nations (1 Sam 8:4-5). Samuel warned the Israelites about the disastrous consequences of having a king (1 Sam 8:10-18).
2. **People who are determined to get their way have difficulty seeing potential problems.** The Israelites wanted a king and they were unwilling to hear the negative consequences Samuel warned them about (1 Sam 8:10-20).
3. **Common occurrences have the potential to become divine appointments.** Saul went looking for his father's lost donkeys, unaware that God was preparing him with an appointment with the prophet Samuel that would change his life (1 Sam 9:3 - 10:1).
4. **Anger directed at sin, injustice, and mistreatment of others can be channeled to accomplish good.** Anger is a powerful emotion and can drive angry people to hurt others with words or physical violence. However, Saul's anger brought about good, because he was angered by the Ammonites' threat to humiliate and mistreat fellow Israelites. Saul used his anger in a constructive way to rescue fellow Israelites from mistreatment (1 Sam 11:1-11).
5. **God's jurisdiction is over all people and every aspect of life.** God granted the Israelites' request for a king, but God's commands and requirements continued for the king as well as the people. Both the king and the people were subject to God's laws (1 Sam 12:12-15).
6. **Continue to pray for people with whom you disagree.** Samuel disagreed with the Israelites' demand for a king, yet he assured them that he would pray for them and teach them (1 Sam 12:23).

### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

#### Role-playing Drama:

Have volunteers dramatize a committee meeting with Samuel. The committee is requesting a king, but Samuel is advising them against having a king.