SAUL REJECTED BY GOD
1 Samuel 12 - 15

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Samuel and Saul

Key-location: Gilgal

Key-repetitions:
• Samuel pronounced God's message: to the people (1 Sam 12:1-25); to Saul (1 Sam 13:13-14; 15:1-3, 14-29).
• God rejected: Saul's dynasty (1 Sam 13:13-14); Saul as king (1 Sam 15:23).
• Negative things about Saul: he offered a sacrifice that only a priest should offer (1 Sam 13:2-14); he partially obeyed God (1 Sam 15:3, 8-9).

Key-attitudes:
• Israelites' fear of the Philistines.
• After Saul's kingship was established, he troubled the people, and displeased God and Samuel.
• Positive attitude about Samuel.
• Saul's arrogant foolishness after his kingship was established.
• Saul's insecurity.
• Samuel's grief over Saul after God rejected Saul.

Initial-situation:
　　　　Prophet Samuel became an old man. He appointed his sons as judges, but they were dishonest. Israel's leaders requested that Samuel give them a king just like the other nations. The Lord told Samuel to give them a king. Saul became the king of Israel. He had a good beginning as king.

Initial-problem:
　　　　The Philistines assembled to fight Israel.

Final-situation:
　　　　The Lord was sorry that he ever made Saul king over Israel.

BIBLE STORY

　　　　The Philistines assembled to fight Israel with soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. The Israelites saw that they were outnumbered and in deep trouble. King Saul waited seven days for Prophet Samuel to show up at Gilgal. Saul's soldiers began to scatter. Saul said, "Bring me the whole-burnt-offering and the fellowship offerings." Saul

offered the whole-burnt-offering. Just as King Saul finished, Prophet Samuel arrived. Saul greeted Samuel.

Samuel asked, "What have you done?"

Saul replied, "My army was scattering; you didn't come at the set time; the Philistines were ready to fight. I thought, `I've not sought the Lord's help.' So I forced myself to offer the burnt offering."

Samuel told Saul, "You acted foolishly. You disobeyed the Lord's commands. Only a priest can offer the burnt offering to the Lord. If you had obeyed the Lord, he would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. Now your kingdom won't endure, because you refused to follow the Lord's command" (1 Sam 13:2-14).

King Saul constantly experienced victory over Israel's enemies (1 Sam 14:47-52).

Prophet Samuel told King Saul, "The Lord Almighty says, `I'll punish the Amalekites for ambushing the Israelites who were coming up from Egypt. Attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them as an offering to the Lord.'" Saul's army defeated the Amalekites. Everyone, except their king, was killed under the terms of the holy ban. Also in disobedience, Saul's army saved the best of the sheep and cattle. Weak or useless animals were destroyed as decreed by the holy ban (1 Sam 15:1-9).

The Lord told Samuel, "I'm sorry I made Saul king. Saul turned away from me and refuses to obey my commands." Samuel was upset and cried out to the Lord all night long (1 Sam 15:10-11).

Samuel caught up with King Saul. Saul reported, "I carried out the Lord's commands."

Prophet Samuel replied, "Then why do I hear sheep bleating and cattle mooing?"

Saul answered, "The soldiers took them from the Amalekites. They saved the best sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest as decreed by the holy ban" (1 Sam 15:12-15).

Samuel interrupted Saul, "Stop! The Lord sent you on a mission, saying, `Go and completely destroy the wicked Amalekites under a holy ban.' Why did you disobey the Lord?"

Saul defended himself, "I obeyed the Lord. I destroyed the Amalekites under the terms of the holy ban. I only brought back their king. The soldiers took the best sheep and cattle from the plunder to sacrifice to the Lord your God at Gilgal."

Samuel replied, "To obey is better than sacrifice. You rejected the word of the Lord; therefore, he's rejected you as king" (1 Sam 15:16-23).

Samuel ordered, "Bring the king of Amalek to me."

Samuel cut the king of Amalek to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal (1 Sam 15:24-33).

Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went to his home in Gibeah. Samuel never saw Saul again all the rest of his life. Samuel grieved long and deeply for Saul. The Lord was sorry that he ever made Saul king over Israel (1 Sam 15:34-35).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did God become displeased with Saul?
2. How were Saul's good intentions violations of God's commands?
3. Today, how do some people with good intentions disobey God?
4. As God's spokesperson, what messages did Samuel give to King Saul?
5. How can you avoid Saul's situation of beginning by doing right but ending by doing wrong?
6. Why did Samuel grieve over Saul?
7. What brings God to grieve over people today?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **It is not enough to begin being faithful to God; one needs to remain faithful to the end.** At the beginning of his kingship: Saul 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) and he did not seek revenge on those who rejected him as king (1 Sam 11:12-13). But after his kingship was established, Saul offered a sacrifice that only a priest should offer (1 Sam 13:2-14); Saul partially obeyed God (1 Sam 15:3, 8-9).

2. **The sinner usually makes excuses for his wrongdoing by shifting the blame to someone else.** After Saul disobeyed God and offered a sacrifice himself instead of waiting for Samuel, he gave an excuse, and blamed Samuel, instead of admitting his wrongdoing (1 Sam 13:12-13). Saul shifted the blame to the soldiers for not obeying God's command to kill all the sheep and cattle (1 Sam 15:21). Beginning with Adam, the sinner seeks to make excuses and blame another for his sin. Adam shifted the blame to God and Eve (Gn 3:12). Eve shifted the blame to the snake (Gn 3:13). After Aaron made the golden calf, he shifted the blame to the people (Ex 32:21-24).

3. **God's continuing to bless the work of the person chosen by him is dependant on the chosen one's faithfulness.** God chose Saul as king and gave him victory over Israel's enemies. Saul disobeyed Samuel (1 Sam 10:8) and offered a sacrifice that only a priest should offer (1 Sam 10:8; 13:2-14). Saul partially obeyed God (1 Sam 15:3, 8-9). Saul betrayed God, and God turned away from Saul (1 Sam 15:10-11).

4. **To gloss over sin in order to have material gain is not being shrewd; it's disobeying God and it sets the sinner up for God's punishment.** Samuel informed Saul that the Lord ordered him to attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belonged to them as an offering to the Lord. Saul's army defeated the Amalekites, but saved the best of the sheep and cattle (1 Sam 15:1-9). Samuel told Saul that he had rejected the word of the Lord; therefore, the Lord was rejecting Saul as king (1 Sam 15:16-23).

5. **God demands obedience and not just participation in religious activities.** God ordered Saul to destroy everything that belonged to the Amalekites. However, Saul spared the best sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel explained that it is better to obey God than to offer him sacrifices (1 Sam 15:22-23).

6. **Good intentions are not enough to please God.** God is not satisfied when a person who has good intentions disobeys him. Saul had good intentions to please his soldiers and offer sacrifices to God; however, God was displeased with Saul's disobedience (1 Sam 13:2-4; 15:16-23). The people on the plain of Shinar had good intentions: unity in order not to scatter, but they disobeyed God's orders to scatter (Gen 9:7), and God confused their language (Gen 11:7-8).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Chant:
•   Tell the story one time.
•   Teach listeners the chant: "To obey is better than sacrifice."
•   Give listeners a hand signal that is a sign for them to repeat the chant. Retell the story, giving listeners the signal to chant at the appropriate places.

Teller:
        The Philistines assembled to fight Israel with soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. The Israelites saw that they were outnumbered and in deep trouble. King Saul waited seven days for Prophet Samuel to show up at Gilgal. Saul's soldiers began to scatter. Saul said, "Bring me the whole-burnt-offering and the fellowship offerings."

Listeners chant: "To obey is better than sacrifice."

Teller:
        Saul offered the whole-burnt-offering. Just as King Saul finished, Prophet Samuel arrived. Saul greeted Samuel.
        Samuel asked, "What have you done?"
        Saul replied, "My army was scattering; you didn't come at the set time; the Philistines were ready to fight. I thought, `I've not sought the Lord's help.' So I forced myself to offer the burnt offering."
        Samuel told him, "You acted foolishly. You disobeyed the Lord's commands. Only a priest can offer the burnt offering to the Lord. If you had obeyed him, he would have

established your kingdom over Israel forever. Now your kingdom won't endure, because you refused to follow the Lord's command" (1 Sam 13:2-14).

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        The Lord told Samuel, "I'm sorry I made Saul king. Saul turned away from me and refuses to obey my commands." Samuel was upset and cried out to the Lord all night long (1 Sam 15:10-11).
        Samuel caught up with King Saul. Saul reported, "I carried out the Lord's commands."
        Prophet Samuel replied, "Then why do I hear sheep bleating and cattle mooing?"
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Teller:
        Samuel interrupted Saul, "Stop! The Lord sent you on a mission, saying, `Go and completely destroy the wicked Amalekites under a holy ban.' Why did you disobey the Lord?"
        Saul defended himself, "I obeyed the Lord. I destroyed the Amalekites under the terms of the holy ban. I only brought back their king. The soldiers took the best sheep and cattle from the plunder to sacrifice to the Lord your God at Gilgal."
        Samuel replied, "To obey is better than sacrifice. You rejected the word of the Lord; therefore, he's rejected you as king" (1 Sam 15:16-23).

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Teller:
        Samuel ordered King Saul, "Bring the king of Amalek to me."
        Samuel cut the king of Amalek to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal (1 Sam 15:24-33).

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