

# Israel Demands a King

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Sunday Plan

SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 8

MEMORY VERSE

1 Samuel 8:7

OPTIONAL VIDEO

King Saul

<https://southside.cc/807-944>

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*God alone is King — everything else is a substitute.*

## For the Teacher

Read this before you teach. We're now deep into the period of the judges — the messy, looping centuries between Joshua's conquest and the kings. God has been Israel's true ruler the whole time. Today that ends. The people walk up to the prophet Samuel and tell him, flat out, that they want a human king *like all the nations* have. God's response, in the most painful sentence in the chapter, is: *they have not rejected you, Samuel — they have rejected me from being king over them*. The kids should leave with one idea firmly in place.

### KEY TRUTH

God alone is King — everything else is a substitute.

**This isn't a small policy disagreement.** Israel had something no other nation had: God himself as their direct ruler. No throne, no palace, no royal taxes — just God, leading them through prophets and judges. When they ask for a king "like all the nations," they aren't asking for a tweak. They're asking to swap God out for a human. That's the weight of verse 7. Don't soften it.

**God's warning is mercy, not pettiness.** Samuel reads them a long list of what a king will do — take your sons for his army, take your daughters for his kitchen, take a tenth of everything you own (8:10–18). It reads like a tax-and-conscription nightmare. God isn't sulking. He's telling them, in advance, exactly what choosing a substitute will cost. They say yes anyway.

**The trade is the bottom line.** They had the real King for free. They asked for a fake king and paid for it the rest of their history. Every kid in the room is being asked, every day, to make the same trade — to swap God for popularity, for fitting in, for whatever the crowd has. The Israel story is their story.

**Where this connects.** Earlier this quarter the kids met Joshua trusting God to fight for him (Q3L1) and Gideon learning that God wins with little so the glory is his (Q3L5). Today they meet a people who had *the* good King and threw him over for a substitute. Same God. Same offer. Different answer. Next week David, who believed God really was King, will face down a giant on the strength of that belief.

**What we're skipping and why.** We stay in 1 Samuel 8 today and let the chapter do its own work. The actual anointing of Saul (9–10) is next week's setup, not today's lesson. Don't try to cover both — 8 needs the full hour to land.

**Repeat the bottom line all morning.** Say it at least six times. Have the kids say it back. Write it on the board. End with it.

### MATERIALS

- Bibles for every student
- Whiteboard or large paper, markers
- Pencils, crayons or colored pencils
- Paper hearts (one per student) — pre-cut
- Activity sheets (printed in advance from this week's activities — pick what you'll use)

## 1. Gather

Welcome the kids and have them sit together. Tell them today's story is about a really bad trade — the worst trade God's people ever made.

### ASK

*Has anyone ever wanted something just because everyone else had it? What was it?*

Let two or three kids answer. Don't push. Then tell them: today they'll meet a whole nation of people who wanted something just because everyone else had it — and what they gave up to get it was worse

than they ever imagined. Write the bottom line on the board:

**SAY**

*God alone is King — everything else is a substitute.*

## 2. The Story

### Setting the Stage

Before opening the Bible, the kids need to know where they are in the larger story. Tell them, in your own words:

**SAY**

*For hundreds of years now, since Joshua led the people into the promised land, God's people had a really unusual setup. Most countries had a king — a man on a throne, with armies and palaces and crowns. Israel didn't. Israel had God as their king. God led them. God protected them. God spoke to them through prophets like Samuel.*

*But the people are looking around at all the other countries, and those countries have kings. And it bothers them. They start to feel left out. Today they walk up to Samuel — God's prophet, an old man now — and they tell him exactly what they want.*

### Reading the Text

Have everyone open to 1 Samuel 8. Pick a confident reader.

#### 1 Samuel 8:4–9

After the reading, work through these questions together:

#### DISCUSSION

1. Look at verse 5. What did the people ask Samuel for? And why?

→ *They asked for a king "like all the nations." They wanted to fit in. They wanted to be like everyone else.*

2. In verse 7, who does God say the people have actually rejected?

→ *Not Samuel — God. "They have not rejected you; they have rejected me from being king over them." This is the big sentence in the chapter. Make sure every kid sees it.*

3. So what was Israel really trading away?

→ *God himself. They had the real King — God leading them — and they were asking to swap him out for a human king like everyone else's.*

### The Warning

Tell the class to keep their Bibles open. God isn't going to just say no. He's going to tell them, in advance, exactly what they're about to buy. Pick another reader.

#### 1 Samuel 8:10–18

Write three columns on the board: **Sons. Daughters. Stuff.**

## DISCUSSION

1. What will a king take from their sons?

→ *Make them soldiers. Make them run in front of his chariots. He'll own them.*

2. What will a king take from their daughters?

→ *Make them cooks and bakers and perfume-makers in his palace.*

3. What will a king take from everyone's stuff?

→ *A tenth of their grain, a tenth of their flocks, the best of their fields and vineyards. He'll tax them. He'll take.*

## TRANSITION

God isn't being mean. He's warning them. He's telling them, before they do it, exactly what choosing a substitute will cost. Keep reading.

## Their Answer

## 1 Samuel 8:19–22

## ASK

*After all that warning, what did the people say?*

*"No! We will have a king over us." They didn't change their minds. They wanted to be like everyone else more than they wanted to listen to God.*

This is the saddest moment in the chapter. God told them what was coming. They said yes anyway. Because being like everyone else mattered more to them than having God as their King.

### 3. The Point

#### What Sits on the Throne

Draw a big simple throne on the board. Tell the kids that inside every one of them is a kind of throne — and whoever sits on that throne is who they listen to, who they follow, who they obey. The Bible says God belongs on that throne. He made us, he loves us, he knows what's best — he is the only good King. But other things try to sit on that throne all the time.

## ASK

*What kinds of things try to sit on the throne in our hearts?*

Write answers around the throne as the kids name them. Steer toward the real ones: *what my friends think, fitting in, sports, video games, getting attention, being first, what I want right now, phones, popularity.* Let the kids name them — they know.

When the throne is surrounded with substitutes, point at the list and tell the kids: every single one of those is a substitute king. None of them love them. None of them died for them. None of them know what's good for them. They're all fakes pretending to be God. And every time we let one of them sit on the throne, we're doing exactly what Israel did: trading the real King for a substitute.

Say the bottom line again, with the kids:

## SAY

*God alone is King — everything else is a substitute.*

### The Memory Verse

Have everyone turn to 1 Samuel 8:7. Have a student read it aloud:

#### SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 8:7

*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.”*

Read it through twice together. Then ask:

#### ASK

*What seven words at the end of that verse are the saddest?*

*“They have rejected me from being king over them.”* Underline those seven words on the board. The whole lesson hinges on that line. Then say the bottom line one more time, with the kids:

#### SAY

*God alone is King — everything else is a substitute.*

## 4. The Work

### King of My Heart

Hand out the pre-cut paper hearts. Tell each kid:

- On the **outside** of the heart, write or draw one thing that sometimes tries to sit on your throne — one thing that pulls you away from following God.
- In the **center** of the heart, write **“God is King.”**
- Draw arrows pointing from the outside toward the center, showing God taking the throne back.

#### NOTE

While they work, walk around quietly. If a kid is stuck on what to write, ask them: “What’s something you really want, or really care about, that you know shouldn’t be more important than God?” Help them name it.

When they’re done, have everyone hold their heart. Pray over them:

#### PRAY

*God, you are the only real King. Forgive us for letting other things sit on the throne in our hearts — friends, fitting in, the things we want. Be the King in our lives this week. Help us trade the substitutes for you. Amen.*

### Activity Sheets

If time remains, pull from this week’s menu. Print enough copies for each kid in advance. The kids don’t have to do all of them — pick what fits the group’s energy.

The menu for this week:

- **God on the Throne** — coloring page reinforcing the throne image and the bottom line.
- **A King Like the Nations** — word search with the names and key words from 1 Samuel 8.
- **What Sits on My Throne** — drawing prompt connecting the lesson to the kid’s own life.
- **Remember the Trade** — fill-in-the-blanks recall using the kids’ Bibles (1 Samuel 8).

The full production specs for each activity are in this week’s activities file.

**NOTE**

While the kids work, sit with them. Ask one or two what they're working on. Reinforce the bottom line one more time before class ends. If you finish early, have a few kids share what they made. If you run long, send the activity sheets home.

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## What Comes Next Week

A young shepherd boy walks into a valley where the whole army of Israel is too scared to fight. He has no armor. He has no experience. What he has is the conviction that God is still the real King — and a giant nine feet tall is about to find out what that means. Next week: David and Goliath.