

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God’s Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

The Book of 1 Samuel . . .

Israel’s history under the Judges was marked by political, moral, and spiritual anarchy and deterioration. The situation was so pervasive that even the sons of Eli, the high priest at the end of the 12th century, had completely apostatized and had used their priestly office for their own gain and pursuits. Just when it seemed that the nation would cave in on its own immorality, God intervened and in response to godly Hannah’s prayers gave young Samuel to her and the nation.

Samuel’s strong leadership as judge, prophet, and priest provided respite to the people from both internal and external threat. Unfortunately, however, when he became old and a successor was needed, it was evident to all that his own sons were unfit to take his place. This factor, along with the invasion of the Ammonites on the east side of the Jordan River, caused Israel to demand of Samuel that he give them a king “like all the other nations” (1 Sam. 8:5, 20). Though disturbed by this request, which implied the rejection of Yahweh as their King, Samuel granted it and selected Saul to be king, a selection determined and sanctioned by Yahweh Himself. Thus the monarchy was established in Israel. The circumstances and timing of its creation were improper, but the concept of human royalty was part of the plan of God as revealed as early as the time of the patriarchs (Gen. 17:6, 16; 35:11; Deut. 17:14-20).

Finally, with the selection and anointing of David, Israel’s second king, Samuel lived to see the inauguration of the dynastic kingship which God had promised as part of His messianic, redemptive plan (Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17). The Books of Samuel, then, embrace that critical period of Israel’s history from judgeship to monarchy.

The events described in 1 and 2 Samuel center around the lives of three important figures—Samuel, Saul, and David. First Samuel opens with the narrative of Samuel’s birth, an event which occurred toward the end of the 12th century, about 1120 b.c.

Study the Text . . .

1 Samuel 1-7 focused on the miraculous birth, call and ministry of Samuel, the prophet and judge of Israel. For approximately 30 years the people were content to follow Samuel’s leadership. But when Samuel had grown old and it appeared he would not live much longer, the people expressed the desire for a king. God had such a king in mind, one who would be raised up and identified in His own good time (Deuteronomy 17:14-15), but that time had not yet come. The stage was set for an encounter between Samuel and the people. Read 1 Samuel 8.

- What reasons did the elders of Israel give for wanting a king (8:1-5)?

- Why did they really want a king (8:20)?
- Why was their desire sinful (8:7-8, 10:19, 12:12)?
- What was wrong with being like other nations (8:20)? Also note Deuteronomy 7:6-11.
- How was Israel's king supposed to be different from the pagan kings (Deuteronomy 17:14-20)?
- What did God command Samuel to do about the request for a king (8:7-9, 21-22)?
- How did Israel respond to Samuel's warning (8:19-22)? Also note how Samuel's predictions were fulfilled (1 Kings 12:1-15).

Group Discussion . . .

- In chapter 8 verse 7 the Lord told Samuel that the people "have rejected Me from being king over them." In what ways do you fail to treat God as your King? How do you seek other sources of protection?
- What are the implications of God being your King?
- The Lord says that the people "have forsaken Me and served other gods" (8:8). As you think about your life what current day idols or "gods" are you often tempted to serve? What does this look like?
- What does chapter 8 verse 18 teach you about the character of God? Is this relevant today?

Study the Text . . .

After Saul failed to serve the Lord faithfully as king of Israel, he was told that he and his dynasty had been rejected and that the kingdom had been given to a neighbor, a man after the Lord's heart (13:14; 15:28). Chapter 16 revealed that this neighbor is none other than David. Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13

- Why does Samuel assume that Eliab is God's choice (16:6-7; compare 9:2, 10:23-24)?
- What happened when Samuel anointed David (16:13)? Explain in your own words.
- Why was David an unlikely candidate to serve as king?
- How is God's sovereignty exhibited in these verses?

Group Discussion . . .

- How would you explain 1 Samuel 16:7 in your own words?
- What other verses in Scripture speak to this same truth?
- In what ways do we often focus on the outward appearance of others, rather than their heart?
- Throughout Scripture why does God place such an emphasis on the heart?
- Like David, why was Jesus not the Messiah the world expected? In other words, did his outward appearance fit the Jewish expectation of the Messiah?

Study the Text . . .

David has already been anointed king but the story of his encounter with Goliath explains how he comes onto the public stage. When we read the account of David and Goliath, it is indeed tempting to come away with the impression that David was a great man of God, and that because of his greatness, the Israelites were delivered from the Philistines. David did have great faith, and he did show great courage when he went to battle against Goliath. Our text does show that David was the right person to become Israel's king, replacing Saul. But this is not the primary emphasis of the text. The emphasis of the text is on how great God is. The text is written to inform us how big and how well armed Goliath was, and how young and poorly armed David was. Eliab, Saul, and Goliath were agreed on this one thing: David was outmatched or so it appeared, at least.

- How did Goliath's repeated challenges affect Israel's army (17:11, 24)?
- David speaks for the first time in 17:26. How is his attitude toward the situation different from everyone else's? (See also 17:34-37)
- How do Eliab (17:28), Saul (17:33) and Goliath (17:42-44) view David?
- How does what David said to Saul (17:34-37) and Goliath (17:45-47) indicate that he did not look only at the outward appearance?
- What was it about Goliath that most deeply offended David (17:26, 36)?
- What lesson did David say his victory over Goliath would teach (17:46-47)?

Group Discussion . . .

- What does the story of David and Goliath teach us about the character of God?
- Why do you think God did not choose someone who was qualified (by worldly standards) to fight Goliath, but instead chose young David?
- Review the contrasting responses of David and Saul in verses 32 and 33. When it comes to difficult or seemingly impossible situations whose response do you most identify with? In those types of circumstances do you find it easy to come up with excuses for why something can't be done and trust in your own strength (like Saul), rather than trust in God and His mighty power?
- If you truly believed God was mighty and strong on your behalf (like He was for David, see 17:37-39) then how would this alter your current lifestyle?