

Old Testament Overview 5

Samuel and Saul – Who is my King? Leader's version

For a one hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

What does the passage say and mean?

60 minutes

1. Read Judges 21:25. Israel was settled in the Promised Land, and a series of judges had been governing them. But what was happening?

Everyone did as he saw fit (meaning that they did not recognise any moral absolutes or laws) – there was no authority figure, and the people did not recognise God's authority either. There doesn't seem to have been much law and order in Israel at this time.

NB 'Judges' – some were military leaders, some were literally judges, all were supposed to be spiritual leaders.

*2. Read 1 Samuel 8:19. What do the people say to Samuel, the last judge, in his old age?

They want a king.

3. Why did they want a king? (v20)

Everyone else had got one! And they wanted a king to lead them in battle.

Questions 4-6 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. You need to write them on flip-chart sheets for the group to work on in pairs.

*4. **SDL** Read 1 Samuel 8:6-7. Who were the people really rejecting as their leader?

God. The problem was not so much that they wanted a king, but their motivation for wanting a king – they were rejecting God's Kingship.

*5. **SDL** Was this a new problem? (see v8)

No, they had been rejecting God and serving other gods for some time.

*6. **SDL** In what ways do you reject God's Kingship in your life?

Think about things that we do that we know are wrong, ignoring God, not spending time with God, living only to please / benefit ourselves etc.

*7. **SHOUT-OUT** Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Before they entered the Promised Land, God said, through Moses, that the people would ask for a king. What qualities did God say the king of Israel should have?

Chosen by God. An Israelite. Not to acquire wealth / many wives / go back to Egypt. To study God's law and keep it. Not consider himself better than his brother Israelites. Not to turn from (disobey) the law.

8. Do you think the kings of Israel managed to do these things? Why?

We would hope so, but we are all sinners and all the kings sinned. Between them they broke all the commands from Deuteronomy 17.

9. Read 1 Samuel 8:10-19. What does God warn the people about having a king? What do the people say to this, in v19?

A king will enslave your sons and daughters, take your best land, charge taxes etc. But, v19, we want a king!

Explain:

The role of the king of the Israelites was to make God's invisible rule visible, to rule with justice and righteousness, defend the vulnerable, lead in battle, show compassion and uphold the law. Samuel the prophet anointed a man called Saul to be king. Saul started well, leading the Israelites to victory in battle, but soon hit trouble. He made decisions that should have been made by God and God was angry and said that he would replace him.

God sent Samuel to anoint a new king. He sent him to Jesse's family, and as Samuel sorted through all the sons of Jesse, God said 'Do not consider his appearance or his height... The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.' (1 Sam 16:7).

10. Why do you think God was so angry with Saul for disobeying him? (1 Samuel 15:23)

Saul had rejected God's word – God's king should have been living under God's authority, not flouting it. He should have been setting the example for everyone else.

11. Read 1 Samuel 16:7. 'Man looks at the outward appearance but the LORD looks at the heart.' This is true for each one of us. How does this verse make you feel, and why?

(You need to explain that God is saying that he had rejected David's brothers as king, not that God is rejecting us!!) This verse may reassure some people that God can see past the bad exterior and see the nice person inside. Others will be made uncomfortable by the thought that God can see past the veneer and see the bad person inside. If this is the case, remind the group that we are all sinners, and nobody really wants God to see the bad stuff inside us.

12. What do you think God sees when he looks at our hearts?

Try not to get into personal details, keep the discussion general and positive. This verse could be quite scary, thinking about God seeing the whole truth about us. Think about God knowing how genuine our repentance is, knowing what we are really like, knowing where we are really hurting and why and loving us despite everything he can see. Remember, God can see past our crimes and our history – he can also see our potential.

13. What can be done about all the bad stuff that is inside us – all the sin? How can we get right with God?

Our sin separates us from God – a chance to explain the gospel! We can't get ourselves right with God, we can't clean up our own hearts. Only by repenting and believing in Jesus' death on the cross on our behalf, can we be made right with God.

*14. David, a young boy was anointed as the next king, but life went on as normal for him for quite a while. In a battle, an enemy called Goliath challenged the Israelites to hand to hand combat. The Israelites were afraid – Goliath was huge, over 9 feet tall! Read 1 Samuel 17:34-37. Who was willing to fight, and why?

David. He was still just a boy, but as a shepherd he had fought lions and bears and he knew this was God's fight and God would win. (NB the world's tallest man was Robert Wadlow, who was measured to be 8 foot 11 inches, so 9 feet tall is not impossible! www.guinnessworldrecords.com)

*15. David killed Goliath with a slingshot and the Israelites went on to win the whole battle. Do you find yourself able to trust God, as David did, in seemingly impossible situations? Why?

*16. Saul was a bad king. David was such a good king that Israel saw him as the pattern for all the kings to come, for the next 400 years. Who is the ultimate King of God's people and how far does his kingdom extend? (see Psalm 2:6-8) What does it mean for this person to be your King?

Jesus. His kingdom extends to all the nations, the ends of the earth, not just the land of Israel. Think about what it means to live as a citizen of Jesus' kingdom, living our lives under his rule and authority.

NB v9 refers to Christ's sovereignty over the nations at the end of time – don't go there unless someone specifically asks!

How can I live according to these truths in my life?

20 minutes

*1. Do you recognise Jesus as your King? Would someone be able to see who your King is if they lived with you for a week?

*2. If we reject Jesus as our King, what are we saying to God? (see John 14:6 and 1 John 5:11-12)

3. 1 Samuel 13:14 tells us that David was 'a man after the Lord's own heart'. What does it mean to be a man or woman 'after the Lord's own heart'?

(NB the context is God talking to Saul and telling him why God was rejecting Saul as King)

It means that we love God, and that this is reflected in our behaviour, not just in theory. Our whole lives – thoughts, words, deeds etc – should reflect our love for God, as we seek to please him and honour him.

TIME-LINE: if you are making a time-line, do the next part of it now – ask the group to add what they have learnt today in the appropriate place. See the time-line on the TFC website for guidance of dates.

Check out – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.

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3. Why did they want a king? (v20)
4. **SDL** Read 1 Samuel 8:6-7. Who were the people really rejecting as their leader?
5. **SDL** Was this a new problem? (see v8)
6. **SDL** In what ways do you reject God's Kingship in your life?
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