

Use Week of:

Unit 10 • Session 3

Israel's First King

BIBLE PASSAGE:

1 Samuel 8–15

STORY POINT:

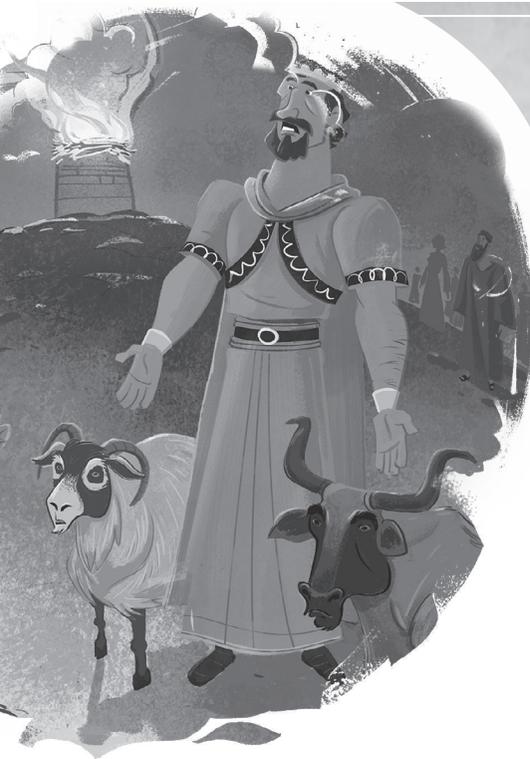
God's people wanted a king like the nations around them.

KEY PASSAGE:

Jeremiah 10:6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.



INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 42



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 44



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 50



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit MinistryGrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

Today's Bible story picks up more than 20 years after the Philistines returned the ark of God to the Israelites. During that time, Israel began to seek God again, and Samuel led them to remove their foreign gods and worship God only.

Samuel had judged Israel throughout his lifetime, but he was getting old. So Samuel made his sons, Joel and Abijah, judges over Israel. But like many sons before them, Joel and Abijah did not follow the example of their father. They disobeyed God and caused problems for Israel. The elders of Israel spoke to Samuel about his sons and demanded a king. All the other nations around them had kings, they pointed out. Samuel knew their desire to imitate the nations around them was sinful, and he prayed to God.

“Give them what they want,” God said. “They have not rejected you; they have rejected Me as their King.” Samuel explained to the Israelites what rights a king would have over them; he warned them that when they regretted asking for a king—and they would regret it—God would not help them.

The people insisted on having a king, so God chose a man named Saul to be the king. By all appearances, Saul was a good king. He was handsome, taller than most people, and God had blessed him. But Saul failed to obey God. First, Saul sinned by burning offerings in Samuel's absence. Later, when the Israelites defeated the Amalekites, Saul did not follow God's instructions for destroying everything. The Lord regretted making Saul king.

As you teach, guide the kids to understand that Saul was not the king the people needed. All earthly kings are imperfect. But we can see how those kings point us to the perfect King, Jesus, who followed His Father's instructions without fail. Thank God for sending us the King we needed—a King who loved us enough to give His life for our salvation.

The BIBLE Story

Israel's First King

1 Samuel 8–15

Samuel was a judge over Israel. At this time, Israel had no king, but the leaders of Israel said, “We want a king like the nations around us!” Samuel wasn’t sure how to respond, so he prayed to God.

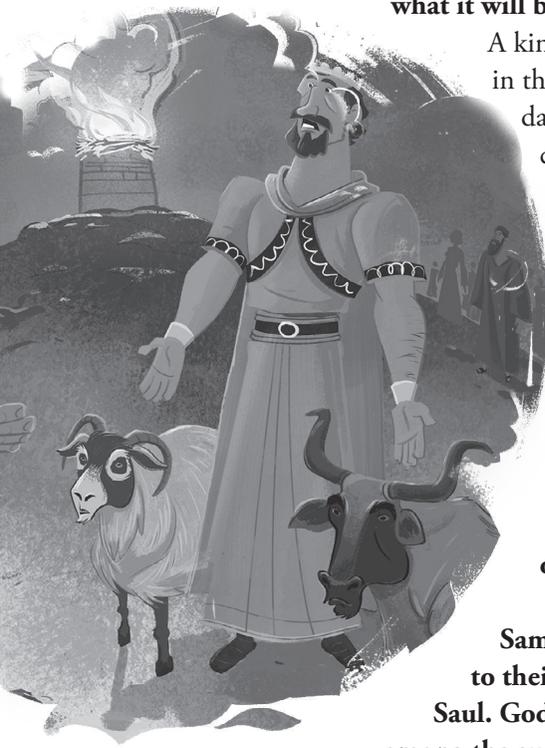
God said, “Give them what they want, but warn them what it will be like to have an earthly king.”

A king could make their sons serve in the army, he could make their daughters work for him, or he could take away their fields and servants. But the Israelites didn’t care. “Give us a king!” they said.

God brought to Samuel a man named Saul. “You will be king!” Samuel said. Saul was surprised; he was from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel. Samuel anointed Saul, and the Spirit of God was with Saul.

When the time came for Samuel to introduce the Israelites to their new king, no one could find Saul. God said, “There he is, hidden among the supplies.” The people ran to Saul. “Long live the king!” they said.

The Israelites thought Saul would be a good king, but Saul did not obey God. One day, Saul took an army to fight the Philistines. But the Philistines had more chariots, more horses, and more



soldiers. Saul wanted to ask God for help. Maybe if he made an offering to God, they would win the battle.

There was one problem: only the priests, like Samuel, were allowed to give offerings to God. Saul waited, but Samuel did not come. Saul's soldiers started to leave, so Saul decided to make an offering to God himself.

Then Samuel arrived. "You have disobeyed God," Samuel said. "You will not be king much longer. God is going to find someone obedient to be king."

Some time later, the Israelites won a battle against the Amalekites (uh MAL uh kights). God wanted Saul to destroy everything, but Saul only destroyed things he didn't want.

God told Samuel, "I regret that I made Saul king because he does not obey Me."

Samuel confronted Saul. "I did obey God!" Saul argued. "I only saved the best animals to sacrifice to the Lord."

Samuel asked, "Does God care more about obedience or sacrifices? You rejected His instruction, so God has rejected you as king."

Saul admitted his sin and asked for forgiveness. Samuel said, "God has taken away your kingship today, and He will make someone else king."

Christ Connection: God intended for a heavenly king to rule over Israel, but the Israelites did not trust God's plan and wanted a king like the nations around them. God gave them a king, but Saul did not obey God. God had a plan to send His Son, Jesus. King Jesus trusted and obeyed God perfectly and died so sinners could be forgiven and accepted.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Emphasize emotion:** Use dramatic facial expressions to show Saul's arrogance about his sin, Samuel's frustration at Saul's actions, and Saul's sadness about losing the kingdom.
- **Move about the room:** Set up stations around the room. Use a crown for the people's request, stones for Saul's sinful sacrifice, and a stuffed cow for Saul's refusal to destroy everything. Move from station to station as you tell the story.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Israel's First King

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Samuel 8–15

STORY POINT: God's people wanted a king like the nations around them.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 10:6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to discuss how they would feel if they were king or queen for a day. What laws might they make? What fun things might they do?

SAY • Kings and queens are often considered the most powerful people in the countries they rule. In some cases, a royal leader might not have a lot of real power, but even in a place like the United Kingdom, the queen has wealth and influence over the people. Today we will learn about a time God's people wanted a human king to rule them.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Find Saul" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Find Saul" activity page. Challenge the kids to search the Bible story art to find and circle Saul. Direct the kids to check the small picture of Saul inset in the picture to check their answer.

SAY • Saul was the first king of Israel. You might think a king should be very brave, but in that picture, Saul seems to be hiding. We'll learn more soon.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Excuses, excuses

Read a series of scenarios to the kids. Select volunteers to come up with an excuse that they think someone might use to get out of doing what is asked.

Suggested situations:

- A friend at school wants someone else to share her dessert at lunch.
- A kid's parents have told him to wash the dishes.
- A girl's little brother asks her to get him some candy from the top shelf that he cannot reach.
- A boy's dog rolls over for him to rub her belly.

SAY • We often give excuses when we don't want to do something. Today, we will learn about a time a king in Israel disobeyed God and tried to give an excuse to avoid getting in trouble.

OPTION 2: Crown toss

Form two teams of kids. Instruct each team to line up, and place a cone across from each team's line. Give each team a plastic crown. Allow the players on each team to take turns tossing the crown toward the cone. Award teams one point if a player hits the cone with the crown and five points if a player manages to land the crown completely around the cone. After each player has made one toss, tally up the scores. Play additional rounds as time allows. The team with the most points at the end wins.

SAY • Hitting the mark in that game was difficult. Today we will learn about the first king of Israel and if he "hit the mark" to be a good king.

- traffic cones, 2
- plastic crowns, 2

Tip: You may choose to make crowns using yellow construction paper and stiff plastic headbands.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



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Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• book about lions

[Leader enters wearing khaki shorts, a white shirt, and a cargo vest. He or she is carrying a book about lions.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone! I'm glad you made it back out here today. It's been a *wild* few weeks. Get it? Anyway, setting aside genius puns for a moment, I wanted to update you on my search for the greatest animal. It's over.

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

I just found out that the lion is the king of the jungle! I was flabbergasted. Had you all heard that before? *[Allow responses.]* Here I was wasting weeks seeking the greatest animal when there had already been an animal crowned as king. I was a bit disappointed at first, but then I started thinking about it and decided that it's for the best.

Lions are big and strong, after all. They are great hunters, and the male lions grow those amazing and beautiful manes. So I guess that case is closed. Lions

are the greatest animals ... Though I must admit, being king of the jungle probably doesn't mean much to animals living in deserts, prairies, underwater, or the Arctic. Maybe I still have more research to do.

OK, so, either way, I need a break. And I know just the story to share with you! It's about a king. Not the king of the jungle, but the first king of Israel.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • We've been talking about God's greatness. Can anyone remember the question and answer we've been asking? [*Allow responses.*] That's it! ***Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.*** That means that, even though there will be things and people in our lives that seem important and impressive, God will always be more important and more impressive. There's nothing and no person that can compare to God. He's the greatest.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review. ·Giant Timeline

LEADER • Two weeks ago, we learned about a woman named Hannah. God gave her a son, then **God called Hannah's son to share God's plan.** Under Eli and his sons, the people did not listen to God. They were often attacked by the Philistines. The Philistines even captured the ark of God! But **God showed the Philistines that He is the one true God.** Over the next 20 years, Samuel led the people to love God and obey Him. Our story picks up during this time.

- Bibles
- “Israel’s First King” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to 1 Samuel 8–15. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Israel’s First King.”

LEADER • God’s people wanted a king like the nations

around them. God was supposed to be their king, but they did not want God as their king. The problem was more than just the people wanting a king, but also the kind of king they wanted. They did not ask for a king who would help them be holy or who would love and obey God. They wanted a king like the nations around them—nations that did not worship the one true God.

God chose to give them what they wanted, a human king. God chose a man named Saul. Sadly, Saul did not obey God. He offered sacrifices that only a priest should have offered, and when Saul chose to disobey God, he tried to make excuses for his disobedience.

One of my favorite passages comes from this story. Saul said that he only disobeyed God so that he might offer God more sacrifices. Samuel responded by explaining that God prefers obedience over sacrifices. Saul was the first king of Israel, but he was not a very good king. The people needed a better king. After rejecting Saul, God chose a better king for the people. But more than that, God had in His perfect plan a perfect King who would come to them—Jesus!

Christ connection

LEADER • God intended for a heavenly king to rule over

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Israel, but the Israelites did not trust God’s plan and wanted a king like the nations around them. God gave them a king, but Saul did not obey God. God had a plan to send His Son, Jesus. King Jesus trusted and obeyed God perfectly and died so sinners could be forgiven and accepted.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 10, Session 3” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about earthly leaders they know of. Guide them to discuss how God’s power over earthly rulers makes them feel.

• “Unit 10, Session 3”
Questions from Kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Display the “Storying Cloth Picture” printable. Explain that storying cloths are sometimes used by missionaries to share the gospel with people who do not have Bible translations in languages they can read.

• “Storying Cloth
Picture” printable

LEADER • *Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.* We’ve been learning that there are people living in the Amazon Jungle who don’t know about God or how great He is. They don’t know that He sent His Son, Jesus, to save them.

Many people groups living in the Amazon don’t have the Bible written in their language. Instead, missionaries and Christians share the Bible through storying—showing pictures and telling God’s stories. We can share stories from the Bible with others too! You can start by practicing sharing today’s story with a friend or family member this week.

• Key Passage Poster
• “There Is No One Like You” song

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Jeremiah 10:6. Then sing “There Is No One Like You.”

LEADER • Jeremiah lived many years after Saul was king. The Holy Spirit gave Jeremiah exactly the right words to say to God’s people. God wanted them to know that God is perfect, and there is nothing and no one who can compare to Him. Only God is all-powerful, perfectly holy, and eternally loving.

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Crown Him With Many Crowns” song

LEADER • God is the only perfect King, but the Israelites rejected Him. **God’s people wanted a king like the nations around them.** Despite this, God still loved them and had a plan to send Jesus to rescue sinners and rule as the King of kings. He deserves every crown there is!

Sing together “Crown Him With Many Crowns.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father, You are great and powerful. No one can stand before You except by Your grace, mercy, and love. You sent Jesus to save us even though we did not deserve salvation. You are good and loving. We worship You. Help us to live for You. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- adhesive name tags
- marker

Write each word or phrase of the key passage on a separate name tag. Make sure you have enough for each kid to wear a name tag. Challenge the kids to work together to put themselves in order without speaking. Play a second round where they can speak. Then allow volunteers to say the verse from memory. Praise each kid's effort and encourage all the kids to continue working on the verse over the week.

SAY • In this key passage, God's Word tells us that no one is like Him. That means that no matter how strong, wise, kind, or powerful anyone else might be, God is stronger, wiser, kinder, and more powerful. *Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.*

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help them find 1 Samuel 8–15. Remind the kids to use the table of contents to find where the book starts. Discuss how the large chapter numbers and small verse numbers help us find specific places in our Bibles. You may choose select passages to read or to briefly review the story.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Where was Saul when it was time to introduce him as king? (*hiding among supplies, 1 Sam. 10:22*)
2. Why did Saul offer a sacrifice before battle? (*Saul's troops were afraid, and Samuel arrived later than Saul expected him to; 1 Sam. 13:7-9*)
3. What did Samuel say about sacrifices and obedience? (*Obedience is better than sacrifices, 1 Sam. 15:22*)
4. Why do you think God allowed Saul to be king if He knew Saul would disobey? *Guide kids to talk about God's power to use difficult circumstances for His glory and our good. Discuss what God might have been teaching the people of Israel through Saul's kingship. Point them to Jesus' crucifixion, where we see God use the evil actions of people to bring about good.*
5. What are some ways people reject Jesus as King today? *Guide kids to honestly discuss ways people might trust in or be led by things other than Jesus. Remind kids that the Holy Spirit helps us love and obey Jesus.*
6. What are some ways Jesus proves He is the perfect King? *Guide kids to think about what Jesus did for us. Remind them that He chose to die even though we were sinners and enemies of God. (Romans 5:6-10) Discuss Jesus' place of honor and glory with God the Father, and point kids to the hope we have for the future, when Jesus will return to reign over everything.*

SAY • God's people wanted a king like the nations around them. God chose Saul to be king, but Saul was not a good king. Jesus is the perfect King. He loves us. He defeated sin and death for us.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- paper
- colored pencils
- Bibles

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment found in Teach the Story.

- hula hoops, 2
- tape
- sticky notes
- pen

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Practice storying

Form groups of three or four kids. Give each group a piece of paper, colored pencils, and a Bible. Invite the groups to find today's Bible story. You may assign a different passage to each group. If your groups consist of mostly non-readers, consider doing this activity all together or instructing adult volunteers to work with each group.

Instruct the groups to work together to draw a pictures that help tell the story. Then they will practice retelling the story to one another. If time allows, ask each group to share with the larger group.

SAY • Missionaries in the Amazon often use storying to share the Bible with people living there. *Storying* is showing pictures and using them to tell stories from God's Word. Many people living in the Amazon Jungle do not know the gospel of Jesus. We can pray that missionaries will be able to reach them with the gospel and that they will know that God is great. ***Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.***

OPTION 2: Good king, bad king

Place two hula hoops on the ground so they slightly overlap in the middle. Tape them down so they do not slide around. Designate one hoop as *good kings* and the other as *bad kings*. Invite the kids to raise their hands to provide traits that might be true of some kings. Write down each suggestion on a sticky note, and then allow the kid who suggested the trait to decide where it would go. She may stick the note in the appropriate area. Explain that the overlapping area is for traits that might describe both good and bad kings.

SAY • Saul was a bad king, but that doesn't mean he had no good traits. Other kings might be good but still have some bad traits. That's the problem with human kings; none are perfect.

God's people wanted a king like the nations around them, but they needed a king very unlike the kings around them. They needed a perfect King. Only Jesus is perfect. He's the perfect King whom God promised to send. He died on the cross for our sins and rose again to defeat death. Jesus will return some day to destroy all evil and fix everything that sin has broken. Then He will rule over all of creation!

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.