



LESSON 1

THE RISE AND FALL OF SAUL

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Is in Charge

SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 8–10; 13; 15

GOD'S BIG STORY: Instead of trusting God to be in charge, the Israelites ask for a king. God grants their request, and Saul becomes king. When Saul's heart turns away from God, God removes the kingdom from him.

WORD OF WONDER: Be still, and know that I am God. —Psalm 46:10a

- Play Stations:
 - Royal Crowns
 - Play Dough People
 - The Rise and Fall of Saul Coloring Sheet
- Curiosity Activity: Copycats
- Curiosity Questions
- Word of Wonder: Psalm 46:10a
- God's Big Story Video
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: Closer, Over & Over
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Prayer and Blessing
- Circle Time: Catch the Rhythm
- Craft: God Is ... Wheel
- Game: O Saul, King Saul!



SCAN FOR THIS
WEEK'S VIDEO!



LESSON 1 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Is in Charge

SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 8–10; 13; 15

WORD OF WONDER: Psalm 46:10a

Lately, I've been contemplating the whole idea of leadership. Everyone wants to be a leader, or society thinks everyone should strive to be a leader. Lead people. Develop people. Be strategic. Take the initiative. Create systems. Be a visionary. Be in charge.

Even the Israelite people thought they needed a leader. Read 1 Samuel 8:4–7.

But I've started wondering lately whether we're getting the whole leadership thing backward. Maybe instead of trying to be the dynamic leader everyone thinks we should be, we need to look at what it means to follow.

The vision of even the greatest human leaders is limited. That is, unless their vision—the place they set their eyes and, subsequently, the eyes of those they lead—is of the one who is truly in charge. Unless their vision is Jesus.

Sixteenth-century Irish poet, Dallán Forgaill, penned these words, later put to music in the beloved hymn “Be Thou My Vision”:

*Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me save that thou art.
Thou my best thought by day and by night;
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.*

Friends, our best ideas—our most clever strategies, mission statements, and catchphrases—will never compare with Jesus. He is our best thought. He is our leader. And when we recognize that He is the One in charge, the burden of leadership lightens as we learn to follow Him.

—Stephanie Rhyne

Kids' Ministry Content Creator

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Saul was a Benjaminite, a tribe that had almost been wiped out by the other Israelites (Judges 20). He was a tall and handsome “man of standing” (1 Samuel 9:1 NIV). The people were impressed with his appearance, but God was looking for a willing heart.

WHAT?

The book of Deuteronomy gives instructions for Israel’s king, so the idea of kingship in Israel was not wrong. It is Israel’s reason—that showed their willingness to reject God’s leadership in favor of worldly security.

WHERE?

Israel still had many enemies to fight. The nation and its borders were not yet secure, which is part of why Israel requested a king. Instead of trusting God as their defender, they wanted a military leader to help them in battle.

WHEN?

The period of the Judges was a time of turmoil for the Israelites that ultimately led to anarchy. “Everyone did as they saw fit” (Judges 21:25 NIV). From here, the monarchy in Israel was formed, and Saul was chosen as their first king.

CONNECTING TO GOD’S BIG STORY:

Saul was chosen as Israel’s first king, and he failed. Ultimately, Jesus showed us what it looked like to reign as a sacrificial king—laying down His life for the world. And He claimed His victory when God raised Him from the dead!



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 1 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Is in Charge

SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 8–10; 13; 15

WORD OF WONDER: Psalm 46:10a

Play Stations

SUPPLIES: various colors of cardstock (1 sheet per kid), scissors (prep only), coloring utensils, stickers, play dough, play dough sculpting tools, stapler (optional, leader only), tape (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Crown Template (1 per kid), The Rise and Fall of Saul Coloring Sheet (1 per kid)

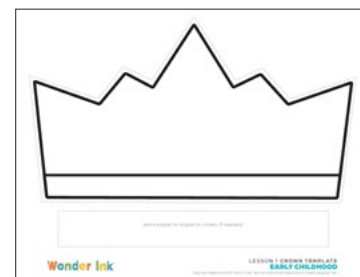
Greet the kids warmly and briefly explain the play stations to them. Invite them to play at any of the stations.

Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help you get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas about what we'll be learning today?

Play Station: Royal Crowns

Set up: Print one copy per kid of the Crown Template onto colored cardstock. Cut out the crown shape. Set out coloring utensils. If you'd like to make the crowns wearable, you can staple or tape strips of cardstock to the sides and secure them together.

Play: Encourage kids to be creative and decorate their crowns. When they're finished decorating, you can hang the crowns together on a wall in your room, or staple or tape the crowns together to fit their heads so the kids can wear them.



Play Station: Play Dough People

Set up: Set out play dough and dough sculpting tools.

Play: Encourage the kids to make play dough people and kings. Their creations can be abstract. Invite them to tell a story about a king (or any other kind of leader) ruling a kingdom, using the play dough people.

Play Station: The Rise and Fall of Saul Coloring Sheet

Set up: Ahead of time, print one copy per kid of the coloring sheet and set out coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw a picture of a crown for a king.

Curiosity Activity: Copycats

Today we're learning about a time when God's people thought they needed to copy other nations and have a certain kind of leader. We'll learn that God is the best leader. Let's see how well you can copy someone who's being a leader. To begin, everyone needs a partner. You're going to be cat and copycats.

Help the kids find partners and encourage them to determine one person from each pair to be the leader in the game first. **Now, everyone face your partner.** Allow kids to respond. **Leaders, you're the cat. The other person is the copycat. It's the leader's job is to move in different ways without moving your feet. You can move your hands, your face, your mouth, whatever you'd like to move, as long as you don't move your feet! Partners, you be the copycat and copy exactly what the cat does.**

Play the game and then, after a few minutes, tell the partners to switch roles and play again. For younger kids, one adult can be the leader, and the kids can copy the leader.

Great job, copycats! Was it more fun to be the leader or the copycat? Allow the kids to respond. **Do you have anyone in your life who is a great leader?** Allow the kids to respond. **In today's story, we're going to hear about some people who thought they needed a certain kind of leader to follow. They thought they needed a king, but they needed to remember that God is already the king. Today we'll see that God always knows what's best for us because God is in charge.**

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bible, bubble solution, bubble wand

WORD OF WONDER

Be still, and know that I am God.

—Psalm 46:10a

Our Word of Wonder for the Kings and Prophets series is from Psalm 46:10a. Let's practice saying the Word of Wonder together. Encourage the kids to say the verse with you.

Help kids learn the Word of Wonder by showing them the motions and repeating the verse several times. After they have learned the verse, use a bubble wand to blow bubbles toward the kids. Encourage the kids to chase the bubbles and clap their hands to pop each bubble. With each clap, encourage kids to say a phrase of the verse.

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **BE STILL,**—Open your palms, facing down. Move your palms downward at the same time.
- **AND KNOW**—Point to your head.
- **THAT I AM GOD.**—Point up.
- **PSALM 46:10a**—Hold your hands open in front of you, as if opening a book.



Even though we're moving around a lot, this verse reminds us to be still. Let's try it again, but you must pop the bubbles without moving at all. Let the bubbles come to you. Use the bubble wand to blow bubbles toward the kids and see if the kids can pop any bubbles without moving.

Being still can help us focus on God. This verse helps us remember that we can know God and trust Him. We can be still and rest in His presence because He is in charge.

Leader Tip: This activity can have a variety of group sizes, such as one kid or the whole group. If done as a whole group, be sure to blow lots of bubbles to ensure that every kid can pop several bubbles and say the entire verse. You can also do the activity in smaller groups.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **What does the verse say we need to do to know God?** (Be still.) **Do you think we always have to be still in God's presence?** (No! There are lots of examples in the Bible of people praising God through dancing and singing and moving around.)
- **Why do you think it's important to be still?** (Possible answers: It helps us focus on God; we can hear His voice; it shows we trust Him rather than trying to make things happen for ourselves.)

VIEW THE GOD'S BIG STORY VIDEO
Watch the God's Big Story Video as
kids eat their snacks!



Declaring God's Wonder

Show the [Early Childhood Declaration Slide](#) and encourage the kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

Thank You, God, that You made me! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Make prayer hands, then point up and then to yourself.

And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands on your hips.

Jesus loves me so much; (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

His love for me is big. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

The Holy Spirit leads me, (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Bring your arms down from above, making a path in front of you.

And I can follow You. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

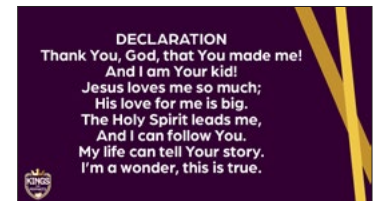
March in place like you're following the leader.

My life can tell Your story. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

I'm a wonder; this is true. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands up, shake your fingers, and celebrate ("praise hands").



Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, thank You for knowing us best and loving us so much. You're such a good God! As we listen today, may Your Holy Spirit teach us and remind us You're in charge. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

Today we'll learn about how God is in charge. Let's sing and praise God to thank Him for how He is the best leader.

Play Closer, Over & Over and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bible, Bible Story Picture (1/SG)

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible, and what do I see? (Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.)

God's big story, waiting for me! (Point to yourself.)

Let's hear part of God's big story, which comes from the book of 1 Samuel in the Old Testament in the Bible.

Read the God's Big Story Script provided.

GOD'S BIG STORY SCRIPT

I have something fun to share with you that's part of God's big story. As I tell today's story, you get to copy what I do. Are you ready? Allow kids to respond.

A long time ago, God showed His people, the Israelites, that He was in charge. God showed that He knows best. God took care of His people. He helped them and saved them from being slaves in Egypt. God brought them into a special land that He had promised them. Clap and cheer as if thanking God. Allow the kids time to copy your actions. **He gave them leaders. God loved His people, and He cared for them. God kept them safe when they followed Him and only worshiped Him. But the people did not always listen to God and follow Him.** Shake your head in a "no, no" expression. Allow the kids time to copy your actions.

The Israelites—God's people—didn't like what was happening. They looked around and saw that all the other nations had kings to lead them. Look around the room and point at pretend things. Allow the kids time to copy your actions. **God's people didn't have a king. Those kings looked powerful and mighty. They won battles. God was already their king, but the people wanted a king they could see. They told God's messenger, the prophet Samuel, to pick a king to lead them.**

Samuel didn't like this idea. He prayed to God. Make prayer hands. Allow the kids time to copy your actions. **God said, "Listen to everything the people are saying to you. You are not the one they have turned their backs on. I am the one they do not want as their king" (1 Samuel 8:7).** **God told Samuel to warn the people that a king would take their money and make them work hard. But the Israelites still wanted a king.** Make a "please" expression and put your hands together, as if asking for something. Allow the kids time to copy your actions. **God gave the people what they asked for.**

God showed Samuel the man who would be king over Israel. His name was Saul. He was tall and strong. God's people thought Saul would be a great leader. Stand up tall. Allow the kids time to copy your actions.

At first, Saul was a good king. He made choices that helped people. Make a thumbs-up. Allow the kids time to copy your actions. **And Saul followed God. But after a while, Saul stopped listening to God. He became impatient and started to do things his own way.** Put your hands on your hips. Allow the kids time to copy your actions.

God kept giving Saul more chances. But Saul never listened to God again. God told Samuel that Saul was no longer going to be king. Saul thought he was in charge. But really, God was in charge. Point up. Allow the kids time to copy your actions.

Sometimes we want to do things our own way, like the Saul and the Israelites. But we can remember that God loves us and leads us. God always knows what's best. We can always trust Him, and we can remember that God is in charge.

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Ask the following question to help kids connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

Our Wonder Truth today is GOD IS IN CHARGE. Where did you see our Wonder Truth happen in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.

In today's story, we learned that Saul was chosen as Israel's first king but that after a while, he stopped following God. Many years later, Jesus showed us what it looked like to live and reign as a good and perfect king, who was willing to die so that we can live forever with Him. And Jesus won when God raised Him from the dead—God truly is in charge!

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them and thank God for knowing them best and being in charge.

God, thank You for knowing exactly what we need and always having a plan that is best. Your ways are better than ours, and we trust You to lead and guide us. Help us make decisions that honor You. We're so glad You're in charge! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: May you know that God loves you, knows you, and will always be with you. He's the one who knows what is best for you and is always there to guide you. May you trust Him as He leads the way.

Circle Time: Catch the Rhythm

SUPPLIES: rhythm sticks or unsharpened pencils (2 per kid), table (optional)

Give each kid a set of rhythm sticks or unsharpened pencils. Before each question, make up a rhythm by playing it on the floor or a table, then encourage kids to copy it using their rhythm sticks. Change the rhythm between each question or let a kid create a rhythm for others to follow.

Is it always easy to follow what your leader did with the rhythm sticks? Allow the kids to respond. **The Israelites had trouble following their leaders too. They asked for a king to lead them, so God gave them a king to lead them. But it's hard to follow a leader who doesn't follow God. The most important leader to follow is God! We can always remember that God leads us, and He is in charge.**

Make It Inclusive: Some preschoolers may struggle with the motor skills or ability to copy a rhythm. You can allow them to use the sticks to bang on a table or piece of hard furniture and pretend it's a drum as they make their own rhythm. Focus less on copying the rhythmic pattern and more on letting them express themselves creatively.

Leader Tip: Instead of rhythm sticks, kids could also use their hands to copy the rhythm.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **Who asked God for a king?** (the Israelites; God's people)
- **Why did the Israelites want a king?** (They wanted to be like the other nations.)
- **What did God do for His people?** (He gave them a king.)
- **Who was the king that God gave the Israelites?** (Saul)
- **What makes God a good leader?** (God is all-powerful; God is loving; God is in charge; God is wise)
- **What else is God in charge of, besides people?** (God is in charge of everything; all of creation; God's kingdom.)
- **Who is a good leader in your life? What makes that person good?**

God always knows what is best for us and for all of creation. He leads us, and we can trust Him. Let's talk to God now in prayer and thank Him for being our leader.

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and thank God for leading us and caring about us. God hears all our prayers!

Craft: God Is ... Wheel

SUPPLIES: cardstock (1 sheet per kid), coloring utensils, kid-safe scissors, brad fasteners (1 per kid), paper clips (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [God Is ... Wheel Template \(1 per kid\)](#)

Before kids arrive, print one copy of the God Is ... Wheel Template for each kid onto cardstock and cut out both circles. Set out coloring utensils and brad fasteners.

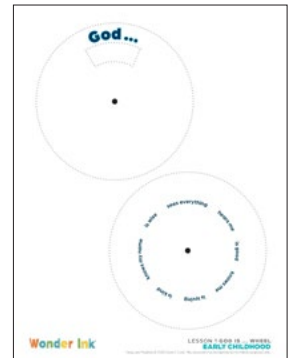
The Israelites didn't trust God as their leader, and Saul didn't obey or follow God.

Show the God Is ... Wheel Template. **This paper shows us that God is so many amazing things. He's good, kind, loving, and so much more. Because God is all these things, we can trust Him to be in charge. He makes the best plans and is the best at being in charge!**

Encourage the kids to color the top wheel of the craft.

Using a brad fastener, poke a hole through both wheels in the middle. Put the wheels together and show kids how to turn the wheels to see the secret messages. You could also use paper clips to hold the papers together (instead of brad fasteners).

You can take this craft home and use it to help you remember all the ways God leads us and helps us.



Game: O Saul, King Saul!

Leader Tip: This game is a simplified version of the Oh Captain, My Captain game, but with different callouts and movements.

In today's story, the people didn't remember what was true: that God is the leader. Saul started off following God, but then Saul didn't remember what's true. He stopped obeying God. We can remember what's true and know that God is in charge. Let's play a game to help us remember what is true and false from our story.

Encourage the kids to gather in the middle of the room. Invite them to listen to each statement and decide if it's true or false. If the answer is true, kids can run to the wall on the one side of the room. If the answer is false, kids run to the wall on the other side of the room. And if the answer is false, encourage the kids to change the answer to make it true.

During the game, I'll say the Wonder Truth (God is in charge) at various times. If you hear the Wonder Truth, you should stop, stand like a statue, and point up.

Use the following statements, or consider adding more of your own, to review the story.

- **The Israelites are God's people.** (True)
- **The Egyptians asked God for a king.** (False. The Israelites asked God for a king.)
- **Samuel prayed and told God that the Israelites wanted a king.** (True)
- **No other nations had kings.** (False. The other nations had kings, that's why the Israelites wanted one.)
- **The Israelites always trusted God.** (False. The Israelites wanted to do things their own way.)
- **Saul was the first king of Israel.** (True)
- **Saul always obeyed God and stayed king for a very long time.** (False. Saul became impatient and began to do things his own way.)
- **Samuel went to Saul and told him he was being disobedient to God.** (True)
- **God warned the Israelites that Saul ate lots of bugs.** (False. Nothing makes this one true—it's just for fun!)