



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. I will be honored among the nations. I will be honored in the earth. The LORD who rules over all is with us. The God of Jacob is like a fort to us. —Psalm 46:10–11

- PRESERVICE
 - OPTION 1 Interactive Game: Am I in Charge?
 - OPTION 2 Interactive Game: Hoop, Hop, Charge!
- Welcome Question: What's one thing you'd like to be in charge of?
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: Closer, Over & Over
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- In Awe of God's Wonder
- Responding in Worship: Holy
- Blessing Your Kids



SCAN FOR THIS
WEEK'S VIDEO!

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 46:10–11

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—wanting to be like the other nations—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!

LESSON 1 ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN

Large Group

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 46:10–11

Series Bumper and Countdown Videos

Choose between the [Kings and Prophets Series Bumper Video](#) and [Countdown Videos](#) to introduce the kids to the series.

Welcome Question

SUPPLIES: paper, coloring utensils, whiteboard (optional), dry-erase marker (optional)

Before kids arrive, display the [Saul Welcome Question Slide](#) or write the following question on a whiteboard: “What’s one thing you’d like to be in charge of?” Set out paper and coloring utensils.



As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome kids by name. Show them the Welcome Question. Consider sharing your answer with kids first and then encourage them to share their answers with a few friends. If kids are reluctant to do so, it’s OK! If you have younger kids, read the question for them, then let them draw their responses.

At your start time ...

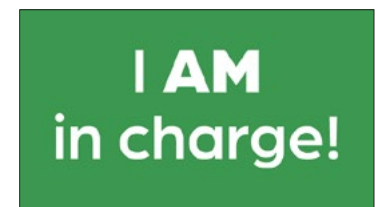
Gather kids together and welcome them warmly. Have them mimic a series of hand claps to get their attention. Then call on several kids to share their answers to the Welcome Question: **What’s one thing you’d like to be in charge of?** Do a different hand clap after each kid answers the Welcome Question.

Today in God’s big story, we’re going to see how the Israelites wanted someone other than God to be in charge of them. They soon realized their new leader wasn’t the best option.

OPTION 1 Interactive Game: Am I in Charge?

For this activity, kids will face the screen where the slides are displayed while you stand facing the kids with your back to the screen. Ahead of time, invite a youth or adult volunteer to work the AM and NOT Slides—alternating between the two slides. If you're unable to project slides on a screen, print out the AM and NOT Slides and invite a volunteer to stand behind you (facing the kids) and hold up the printed slides during the game.

Display the **Am I in Charge? Slide** and gather the kids so they're facing the screen. **Let's play a game called Am I in Charge? If the words on the screen behind me are green and say, "I AM in charge," then you'll do everything I say. Let's practice! Display the first AM and NOT Slide**, which says, "I AM in charge!" With your back to the screen, say: **Jump as high as you can.** Pause for kids to jump. **Great job! Now, if the words on the screen are red and say, "I am NOT in charge," you'll do the opposite of what I say. Let's practice! Display the second AM and NOT Slide**, which says, "I am NOT in charge!" **Jump as high as you can.** Pause for kids to do whatever they think is the opposite, such as crouching really low or lying on the ground. **Very good! I won't know when the slides switch back and forth, but you will! And your job is to either do what I say or do the opposite, based on what the slide says. OK! Let's get started!**



The volunteer working the slides can switch back and forth between the AM and NOT Slides as you give kids simple commands that kids can easily do or do the opposite of. Here are some ideas: stand on one foot, walk in slow motion, whisper your name, raise one hand above your head, say, "Hello" in a loud voice, stand still like a statue, bend down and touch your toes, curl up into a ball, wiggle like you're doing a silly dance, sit down very slowly, stretch out your arms and legs like you're a human starfish. Play for several minutes and if time allows, invite kids to take turns being the leader.

Being in charge during this game didn't last long, did it? In God's big story today, we're going to see how the Israelites thought they knew who they wanted to be in charge, but the king's reign—or period of being in charge—didn't last long. God loves us and leads us. We can trust Him to be in charge because He knows what's best! Display the Saul Wonder Truth Slide. Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD IS IN CHARGE.**



Make It Inclusive: If any kids have limited mobility, modify this game to be played while seated by choosing instructions that everyone can do while sitting down.

OPTION 2 Interactive Game: Hoop, Hop, Charge!

SUPPLIES: large, plastic hoops (10–15); masking tape (optional)

Ahead of time, set out large, plastic hoops in a curved trail formation on the floor. An alternative to large, plastic hoops is to create a series of large circles with masking tape on the floor.

Display the Hoop, Hop, Charge! Slide. Help kids form two teams. Invite each team to line up on opposite ends of the hoop trail, facing each other.

Explain that when you say, “Go!” the first player of each team will hop through the hoops until they meet their opponent on the trail. Upon meeting, they’ll have a Rock, Paper, Scissors battle. If they tie, they play until someone wins. If kids are unfamiliar with Rock, Paper, Scissors, demonstrate a round.

The winning team will yell, “We’re in charge!” and their teammate will continue hopping through the hoops. The losing player quickly exits the hoops and returns to the back of his team’s line. The next player from that team will hop to meet their opponent to play Rock, Paper, Scissors. The winning team will be the one whose player reaches the hoop at the starting point of the opponent’s team.



Leader Tip: This game can feel a little confusing at first, so start out slowly, helping kids keep track of which team won the last Rock, Paper, Scissors battle. As kids catch on, the game will start to move more quickly.

After one or more rounds, gather the kids. **Being in charge during this game didn’t last long, did it?**

In God’s big story today, we’re going to see how the Israelites thought they knew who they wanted to be in charge, but the king’s reign—or period of being in charge—didn’t last long. God loves us and leads us. We can trust Him to be in charge because He knows what’s best! Display the Saul Wonder Truth Slide. Today’s Wonder Truth is GOD IS IN CHARGE.



Small Group

Introduce small group time. While kids are in small group, consider sitting in the groups for a few minutes each. Engage and interact as is appropriate.

Countdown

After about 15 minutes of small group, give a 5 minute warning and begin the countdown.

VIDEO: COUNTDOWN

"Hey everyone! Welcome to our Large Group Worship time! My name is ____ and I'm excited to take this time to worship God, review what we just read, and talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning about God! We are going to pray as we prepare our hearts to worship God!"

Declaring God's Wonder

Display the [Saul Declaration Slide](#). Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)

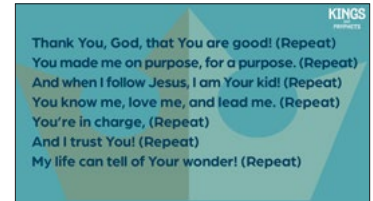
And when I follow Jesus, I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)

You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)

You're in charge, (Kids repeat.)

And I trust You! (Kids repeat.)

My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)



Prayer of Invitation

Lead kids in a prayer of invitation before entering into worship and God's big story: **God, You are here, and we thank You for being with us. As we listen today, prepare our hearts to hear You and to be willing to obey. We invite Your Holy Spirit to move in us as we learn how You love us, lead us, and know what's best. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

God knows what's best—He's in charge and leads us with kindness and love! Let's worship Him now through music.

Play [Closer, Over & Over](#) and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

God's Big Story

Display the [Saul Title Slide](#).

Remind kids that the book of 1 Samuel is in the Old Testament.

Let's start by reading part of God's big story directly from the Bible.

Afterward, we'll experience more of the story!

Watch the [God's Big Story Video](#).



LESSON 1 THE RISE AND FALL OF SAUL

EXPERIENCE IT! SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: 11" x 17" paper (7 sheets), desk or table, chair, microphone (or toy microphone), video camera (optional), blazer/sport coat (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Audience Cards Sheets, Experience It! Script (1 extra copy of script), News Theme Song Sound Effect (You can find a sound on Spotify or Youtube)

Ahead of time, print one copy of the Audience Cards Sheets on 11" x 17" sheets of paper. (There is also an 8.5" x 11" version available.) Invite a leader to assist as the stagehand and provide her with a copy of the Experience It! Script. Set up the stage to look like a newsroom with a desk (or table) and chair at the front. Consider inviting a second volunteer to serve as the cameraman who stands next to a video camera, "pretending" to film the news anchor. The news anchor (either you or a different storyteller) will hold a toy or real microphone and, if possible, wear a blazer/sport coat. The news anchor will have the Shhhh Audience Card Sheet at the news desk/table. The stagehand will stand and hold the other six Audience Card Sheets off to the side of the stage.

Some kids might be unfamiliar with a traditional news broadcast or the idea of a live studio audience. So before getting started, take a moment to explain the following: **Some television stations record news shows with a host, or anchor, announcing the news, and some television shows are filmed with people in the audience. During live broadcasts, stagehands hold up cue cards with instructions on them for the audience. The audience members say or do what the cue cards say. Keep that in mind as you listen to today's story! OK, let's get started ...**

STAGEHAND: Quiet on the set, please. Shhhhhh! We're about to go live. In three, two, one ...

Play the News Theme Song Sound Effect for several seconds, then fade it gradually. The news anchor begins speaking after the song has faded.

NEWS ANCHOR: We interrupt our regularly scheduled program to give you this special news bulletin. We are reporting live about what has taken place in the ancient nation of Israel. Let's review what happened up to this point ...

Through everything, God showed His people that He was in charge and that He knew best.

Stagehand holds up the Clap Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond by clapping. (Stagehand can also read the Clap Audience Card Sheet aloud and lead the kids in several seconds of clapping.)

God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt and brought them into the land that He had promised them. He raised up leaders for them and showed that He loved His people and cared for them. God had kept them safe from enemies. But God allowed other nations to conquer the Israelites whenever they turned away and served other gods.

The Israelites didn't like this system. They looked around and saw that all of the other nations had kings leading them. Those kings seemed powerful and mighty, able to win battles and defend territory. Instead of trusting God to be in charge, Israel decided they wanted to have a king, just like all the other nations.

Stagehand holds up the Bummer! Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond by saying, “Bummer!”
(Stagehand can also read the Bummer! Audience Card Sheet aloud along with the kids, so they know to follow along.)

Folks, it looks like our live audience isn’t too fond of that idea! Of all the things God has done for those Israelites, now they want a king like the other nations have!

STAGEHAND: Are you kidding me?

News Anchor holds up the Shhhh Audience Card Sheet, and the kids respond.

NEWS ANCHOR: (whispering to stagehand) We are live, you know! Sorry, folks! So, the Israelites went to God’s messenger, the prophet Samuel, and told him to pick a king to lead them.

Stagehand holds up the Bummer! Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond.

Except they forgot about one thing.

Stagehand holds up the Huh? Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond.

They forgot they already had a King in charge: God! But, once again, they didn’t trust God and wanted to do things their way.

STAGEHAND: Are you kidding me?

News Anchor holds up the Shhhh Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond.

NEWS ANCHOR: (whispering to stagehand) Would you please stop interrupting? Sorry, folks! Back to our live coverage. The people went to the prophet Samuel and told him to pick a king to lead them, but Samuel didn’t like this idea! So, he prayed to God, and you’ll never guess what God said!

Stagehand holds up the What? Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond.

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).

STAGEHAND: Are you kidding me?

News Anchor holds up the Shhhh Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond.

NEWS ANCHOR: Actually, folks, I’m not kidding. God even told Samuel to warn the people that a king would take money from them as a tax and make them work hard for him. But the Israelites didn’t care. They wanted to be like the other nations. They wanted Samuel to pick a king to be in charge. God gave the people exactly what they asked for.

Stagehand holds up the Gasp Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond.

God showed Samuel the man who would be king over Israel. His name was Saul; he was tall and handsome, and everyone thought he would be a great leader.

Stagehand holds up the Clap Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond.

But when Samuel went to introduce Saul to everyone, Saul was hiding among the supplies! They brought him out, and everyone was glad Saul was made king. They were excited to follow him, and they forgot that God was the one in charge.

For a while, Saul was a good king. He helped the Israelites fight their enemies, the Philistines, and he brought them lots of success.

Stagehand holds up the Clap Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond.

But Saul became impatient and disobeyed God. Instead of waiting for Samuel, who often heard from God, Saul started to do things himself. Instead of defeating all of Israel's enemies like God said, Saul started to make up his own rules. Saul's pride got the better of him.

STAGEHAND: Are you kidding me?

News Anchor holds up the Shhhh Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond.

NEWS ANCHOR: (whispering to stagehand) **Seriously! Sorry, folks! Back to our live broadcast ... Samuel went to Saul and asked him why he hadn't obeyed God. Saul made excuses, saying he wanted to give God a good sacrifice as a gift—killing the best animals they took from their enemies as a gift to God. But Samuel said, "What pleases the LORD more? Burnt offerings and sacrifices, or obeying the LORD? It is better to obey than to offer a sacrifice " (1 Samuel 15:22).**

Eventually, Saul ran out of chances. His heart had turned away from God, and he was disobedient. So, God decided that Saul wouldn't be king any longer. Samuel told Saul that God had torn the kingdom away from him.

Stagehand holds up the What? Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond.

I'm here to report to you that God took away the kingdom from Saul, and he is no longer king. God is giving it to someone else.

STAGEHAND: Are you kidding me?

Stagehand holds up the Cheer Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond.

NEWS ANCHOR: Saul could have obeyed God and remained king, for God made Saul a powerful military leader. But Saul and the Israelites didn't follow God's design. They wanted to be in charge.

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

Stagehand holds up the Cheer Audience Card Sheet, and kids respond.

Now, back to our regularly scheduled program.

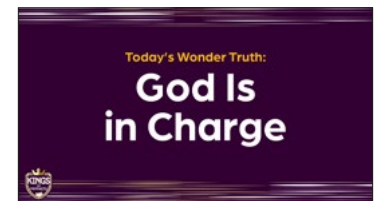
Thank kids for their full participation.

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Display the Saul Wonder Truth Slide.

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

God chose Saul as Israel's first king, yet he failed to obey God. Many years later, Jesus showed us what it looked like to live and reign as a selfless king who was willing to die so that the world might live. And Jesus claimed His victory when God raised Him from the dead—God truly is in charge!



In Awe of God's Wonder

Spend a few moments allowing kids to think about the wonder of God's story.

What did you wonder about in today's story? Allow kids to answer freely.

God gave the Israelites a king, even though He warned them how difficult it could be for them.

What do you think it shows us about what God is like? Allow kids to answer freely.

Responding in Worship

SLIDE: RESPONDING IN WORSHIP

Talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning with next steps such as tithing, prayer, asking questions, and worship. Encourage kids to ask their SG leaders any questions they were wondering during the lesson.

***Introduce this next song and invite kids to respond and participate in worship. See the "Worship Posture Tutorial" on the RBKids Resource Page.



WORSHIP VIDEO: Holy

Blessing Your Kids

Speak this blessing over your kids, as a group or as individuals. If you bless kids individually, insert each name into the blessing.

Blessing: May God remind you that He's got you. He knows you, loves you, and leads you. He's in charge and knows the next move for your life. May you trust Him and remember He will always love and guide you.