



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

- Welcome Question: What's one thing you'd like to be in charge of?
- Curiosity Questions
- Word of Wonder Activity
- God's Big Story
- Discussion Questions for Elementary Kids and Preteens
- Small Group Prayer Time
- LARGE GROUP
- Elementary Responding in Worship: Reflective Poster Art
- Preteen Responding in Worship: Confession Reflections



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

Small 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

Pre-Service Connection (15–20 min)

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

Games & Activities Guide

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have activities ready to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them! Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

Use the Welcome Question and the following "I'm Curious" questions to engage kids. Say **"I'm curious.."** before each question and give kids an chance to think before answering each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

Consider having a whiteboard or poster for kids to write or draw answers to any of the questions:

- **What's something you are in charge of? What's something you aren't in charge of?**
- **Do you ever want to do things your way instead of following the person in charge?**
Tell about it.

Small Group Begins

After the Opening Activity or game, Large Group Leader will begin small group time by reading the Welcome Question aloud and inviting everyone to open their Bibles and begin.

Word of Wonder Activity

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 (NirV)

SUPPLIES: Bible, scissors (prep only), paper clips (1 per small group), tape (1 roll per small group)
Word of Wonder Slips NirV,

Ahead of time, print one copy of the Word of Wonder Slips NirV each small group and cut apart the verse slips. Use paper clips to keep each verse set separate.

Our Word of Wonder for the Kings and Prophets series reminds us that we don't need to be in control. We can be still and trust God because He loves us. He's in charge! Let's say the verse together now. Open your Bible to Psalm 46:10–11. Read Psalm 46:10–11 several times together.

Let's practice our Word of Wonder by playing a simple game where one person is in charge. Select a willing volunteer to be in charge. If kids are hesitant, choose two kids to be in charge together.

Tape a verse slip to the backs of all the other kids. (There are 13 verse slips total. If needed, tape 2–3 consecutive slips to each kid's back.) Explain that the person in charge will be responsible for getting everyone else lined up in verse order—he will read the slip on each person's back and tell them where to stand. Once everyone is in order, kids will remove their verse slips and read them in order, checking to see if their order is correct. If time allows, play multiple times with different kids in charge each time.

Leader Tip: For Younger Kids. Number the slips 1–13 and tape them to the front of kids' shirts (rather than their backs). The kid in charge can use the numbers to help her put the other kids in verse order. Be ready to help as needed!

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

Invite kids to open their Bibles to 1 Samuel. Remind kids that the book of 1 Samuel is in the Old Testament and demonstrate how to find the book, chapter, and verse.

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

Have the kids form three groups. Give each group one of the following sections of Scripture to read aloud when it's their turn: 1 Samuel 8:4–7; 10:20–25; and 15:19–23. The kids in each group might choose one spokesperson to read aloud, or they may all read their assigned verses in unison.

Elementary Questions

- **Which group of people wanted a king to be in charge of them?** (the Israelites)
- **Who did God name as king over the Israelites?** (Saul)
- **Was Saul a good or a bad king? Why?** (He was a good king at first. Then he became full of pride and disobeyed God.)
- **Why do you think Saul made up his own rules?** (Possible answers: Saul thought his way was the best; he was filled with pride; he was impatient and didn't want to wait to talk with Samuel or do things God's way.)
- **If you were an Israelite and Saul was your king, how would you feel? Why?**
- **We can trust God to be in charge because He knows what is best! How is God in charge of you? Your family? The world?**

Saul chose to do whatever he wanted as king, even when it was against what God wanted him to do. Because God is in charge, He always knows what's best for us. We can trust Him with everything. Let's talk with God and thank Him for loving us so much!

Make It Inclusive: Open-ended questions can be difficult for some kids to answer. Consider modifying the questions into yes/no format or offering two answer choices for each.

Preteen Questions

- **Why did the Israelites want a king other than God?** (The nations around them had kings who seemed mighty and powerful. They wanted to be like the other nations.)
- **What was God's warning to the Israelites about having a king?** (A king will take money from them as a tax and make them work hard for him.)
- **When Saul first became king, what was he like?** (Saul was tall, handsome, and seemed like he would be a good leader. For a while, he was a good leader.)
- **If you were Samuel and had to ask God for a king on behalf of the Israelites, what would you have been thinking or feeling?**
- **Why do you think Saul kept making up his own rules rather than following God's way?** (Possible answers: Saul thought his way was the best; he was filled with pride; he was impatient and didn't want to wait to talk with Samuel or do things God's way.)
- **What's something in your life that you need to let God be in charge of?**

There are many times in our lives when we want to do things our way. But God knows exactly what we need, and we can always trust that His ways are better than ours. He is in charge and knows what is best for us. Let's talk with God and thank Him for loving us.

Small Group Prayer Time

Invite kids to sit with a friend and share their praises and prayer requests. Encourage kids to share about something they may need God's help with and offer that as a prayer to Him. Have friends pray together and bring the group back together as you offer a closing prayer.

Leader Tip: Allow kids to sit in the presence of God and talk with Him—there's no rush! Remind kids that praying to God is simply like talking with a friend—they can tell God anything.

LARGE GROUP

Elementary Responding in Worship: Reflective Poster Art

SUPPLIES: posterboards or large sheets of butcher paper (3 or more), marker (prep only), coloring utensils, masking or painter's tape (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: music from the [Kings and Prophets Elementary Spotify playlist](#) (optional)

Ahead of time, write the following phrases across the top of three posterboards or large sheets of butcher paper (one phrase per poster):

- People Who Are in Charge Sometimes ...
- God Is in Charge All the Time ...
- One Way I Can Follow God This Week ...

If your group is large and it will be difficult for all the kids to draw on one poster at the same time, prepare multiple sets of the three posters.

Set the posters on tables or on the floor or tape them to the wall where kids can reach to draw on them. Set coloring utensils out near the first poster.

Gather the kids. **All of us have people in our lives who are in charge, or have authority, at least at certain times and in certain places. Our first poster says, "People Who Are in Charge Sometimes ..."** Show kids the first poster. **Let's spend 1–2 minutes drawing pictures of people who are in charge in our lives. You might draw parents or caregivers, teachers, coaches, older relatives, pastors, Sunday school teachers, or others!** Give kids time to draw. Consider playing music from the [Kings and Prophets Elementary Spotify playlist](#) quietly in the background whenever kids are drawing.

In God's big story today, we saw that even when the Israelites asked God for a king, God was the One truly in charge. The same is true in our lives. There are people in authority who we need to listen to, such as teachers and parents, but God is the one who is ultimately in charge. God is the only perfect leader, and we can trust that His way is always good and right! Show kids the second poster. **When you think of God, what pictures or symbols come to mind?** Pause for kids to think and share. **When you think about how God is in charge and about how His ways are always good and always the best, what pictures or symbols come to mind?** Pause again for kids to think and share. **That's what you get to draw now on our second poster, which says, "God Is in Charge All the Time ..."** Give kids time to draw on the second poster.

Show kids the third poster, which says, **"One Way I Can Follow God This Week ..."** **God is in charge! He loves us more than we could ever imagine, and we can trust Him and His good ways! What is one way you can obey God and follow Him well this week? Maybe it's by showing kindness to a friend, forgiving a sibling, or helping a parent.** Invite kids to share their ideas. **On our third poster, let's draw pictures of one way we can follow God this week!** Give kids time to draw on the third poster.

After a few minutes, invite kids to share what they drew on any of the three posters. If your group is large, encourage kids to share with a partner; then call on several to share with the group. If possible, tape the three posters to the wall and keep them there throughout the Kings and Prophets series.

Make It Inclusive: If some kids struggle to focus or understand and follow instructions, pair them with a peer helper or offer them a seat near a leader who can encourage and help them as needed.

Preteen Responding in Worship: Confession Reflection

SUPPLIES: whiteboard, dry-erase markers, paper, coloring and writing utensils, posterboard (optional), tape (optional), markers (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: music from the [Kings and Prophets Elementary Spotify playlist](#) (optional)

You'll need a large whiteboard at the front of the room for this activity. Alternatively, tape a posterboard to the wall that you can write on with markers.

Gather the kids. **All of us have people in our lives who we listen to at certain times and in certain places. Who are some of the people you listen to, at least sometimes?** Write the names/titles kids share on the whiteboard or invite kids to come up themselves and write on the board. They might name people like their teachers, parents, celebrities, influencers, coaches, family members, etc. (Be sure to leave some space at the top of the whiteboard.)

Of the people on the board, who is in charge—or in authority—at least sometimes? Circle the names/titles kids list. Then above all the names on the board, write “GOD” in large letters. Invite a kid to come up and draw one giant circle around everything on the board, including “GOD” across the top, to showcase that God is in charge of everything.

God is in charge; He has authority over all. This doesn't mean that every person or leader listens to God. But God is in charge, and His power and authority last forever, longer than any human leader. God's way is always good, always best, and we can always trust Him.

Invite kids to spread out and reflect quietly as you continue. Have paper and coloring and writing utensils available for kids who would like to journal or draw their thoughts. Some kids may choose to just sit quietly as they reflect.

In today's story, Samuel told Saul that obedience to God is more important than any sacrifice, or gift, he can give Him. What is one way you have obeyed God lately? Pause for kids to reflect.

God knows you and loves you. Even when you disobey Him or when you follow someone who is not listening to God or following Him, He is ready to forgive you when you turn back to Him. What is one way you have disobeyed God recently? Pause for kids to reflect.

God is quick to forgive and full of compassion for you. He is waiting for you. Are you ready to turn back to Him? Talk with God now. If you're ready to confess your sin and ask for forgiveness, tell Him. If you're not sure, tell Him that too! Pause as kids pray quietly.

God is in charge, but He is not a dictator. He will never force you to follow Him. If you want to follow God—whether for the first time or simply as a reminder or a recommitment—I invite you to stand up, to face the whiteboard, and to quietly walk in place.

Close this time of reflection by teaching kids a simple breath prayer they can say anytime and all the time. Explain that a *breath prayer* is a word or phrase to repeat in a single breath with one part on the inhale and the other part on the exhale:

Inhale: God, You're in charge, ...

Exhale: Help me follow You.

Repeat this prayer with the kids several times. Give kids the opportunity to step toward the whiteboard as they repeat the prayer with each step as a symbol that they want to follow God and His good ways. Consider playing music from the [Kings and Prophets Elementary Spotify playlist](#) quietly in the background during this time.

Make It Inclusive: Have simple fidget objects available for kids who focus best when their hands are occupied. Small foam stress balls and beads on a string often work well!