



Samuel

MEETING AIM

To show that we cannot lead without willingness and cooperation from people – sometimes people will be unwilling to listen so we need to learn when to be humble and step back.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Samuel 8

BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

Samuel has been leading the people of God for some time, but now the people present him with a demand for a king. They want to be like the people around them. Not only is this a rejection of Samuel's leadership, but of God's. When they entered the promised land, God knew that they wouldn't be able to resist the influence of the other nations around them, and so it has proved.

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days."

INTRO ACTIVITY 5 MINS

Split the young people into smaller groups. Explain that they have five minutes to come up with a political party name and manifesto to present to the other groups. The idea is that they are campaigning to run the country, youth group or church (choose which would be most appropriate for your group). Explain that they will then have two minutes to convince the rest of the group to vote for them.

Once each team has spoken, ask them to vote for one of the other groups by messaging you. Stipulate that they are not to vote for their own team. Ask them how it felt to be making decisions for such a wide group of people. Did they find that there was a certain group that they wanted to help more?

Announce the results. Ask the winning

team if they really think they will be able to be in charge or would they want someone else to do it. Ask the losing teams if they would be willing to go along with what the others have decided and follow them.

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

Ask everyone to read through 1 Samuel 8 quietly by themselves (or they can listen to it with headphones, if they prefer). Give people a few moments to mention anything that stood out to them. Then listen to it again, either asking a young person or another leader to read.

Split into two groups as your video conferencing allows, one group discussing why the Israelites would want a king, the other talking about why having a king might be a bad idea. Get the groups to feed back to each other. Do they think that Samuel made the right decision?

Explain that Samuel was dealing with a difficult situation and was doing his best to follow God's will and get the Israelites in tune with that. He made the best decision he could; his final choice of judges, his sons, had been a massive failure.

So he took the cry of the people to God and handed it over to him.

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Continue your discussion about the Bible passage using these questions:

- If you were Samuel, how would you feel about the people's demands and response?
- What would you have done in Samuel's position?
- How might God have felt about the people's attitude?
- What does this story tell you about leadership?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

Get all the young people to find some space on their own and to make themselves comfortable – lying down with their eyes closed. Say you are going to tell them a story and they have to imagine themselves in that story, focusing only on your voice and the story you are telling.

Start by telling them to breathe in and out slowly, to feel the floor beneath them. Tell them to answer the following ques-

tions in their heads. Read the following slowly, giving the young people time to think and reflect. Ask them to imagine themselves in the desert, sand everywhere; can they feel it between their toes? Can they feel the hot sun on their neck? They are in the Israelite camp – what can they smell? Tell them to imagine they are now in a city. How did they get there? Who led them there? What does the city look like?

They have a home and a family; what is their job? What does the front of their house look like? They hear rumours that they are going to be attacked; how do they feel? What are the other people in their street doing? What can they see from their window? What can they hear? Who is going to save them? They pray to God; what is their prayer? God has sent them judges in the past but now they want a king. What do they want their king to look like? When he speaks, what does he say? How does his voice sound? How does he lead the people? What are his values? What does he stand for? How does he treat his people? How does he worship and honour God?

He saves them from the invading force. How does he do that? Does he lead his men into battle? Does he negotiate? Does the mere thought of him scare off the enemies? Is he the answer to their prayers? How do their neighbours respond to him? What do they think? Do they celebrate with them? Do they remember that he is a gift from God? Do they remember that he is an answer to prayers? Or has he replaced God as their saviour?

Bring the activity to a close by asking the young people to share their thoughts and reflections on that. How do they feel about the Israelites' demand for a king?

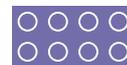
PRAYER 5 MINS

You will need: pens and paper

Encourage the group to write a prayer to God. They should talk to him about what they discovered and learned today about themselves, God and their relationship with him.

If anyone would like to, get them to read out their prayer to the rest of the group.

This session was inspired by ideas from the *Premier Youth and Children's Work* archive, adapted by **ALEX TAYLOR**.



Saul

MEETING AIM

To discover that God uses everyone, even those who feel the most unprepared.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Samuel 9-10

BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

This is a fairly long story, and you'll need to practise reading out the long passage of 1 Samuel 9-10 before the session. However, in this long story, young people may well discover something of themselves in Saul – a man who saw himself as the least important person in the least important family. For the first part of his reign, God uses this reluctant king greatly..

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Chat together about any big surprises they have had, or the biggest surprise they can remember from the past few years.

INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

Challenge the group to come up with some examples of unsung heroes. These are people who do a lot of work but might not necessarily get the recognition they deserve. Examples might include members of music groups who aren't the lead singer, the workhorse defender in a football team or an actor that takes on supporting roles, rather than being the star.

Gather a few suggestions and say that you're going to choose a leader from this group of people. Who would they choose and why?

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

You will need: pens and paper; retelling of 1 Samuel 10 (visit: <https://bit.ly/3dPZguA>)

If you did Session 1, ask the group to review what happened in 1 Samuel 8, where the people demand a king. Explain that the next part of the story is quite long, so you're going to halve it and explore the two parts in different ways. Read out 1 Samuel 9:1-17 and ask half the young people to note down what they discover about Saul and the other half to write down what God does in this story.

Go through what the young people have discovered. Wonder together why God chose Saul, and how elaborate the events are that lead up to Samuel meeting Saul.

Read 1 Samuel 10:1 and then share your screen to show the retelling of 1 Samuel 10. Decide together what this next chapter tells you about Saul and about God's actions.

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Continue your discussion about the Bible passage using these questions:

- How might Saul have felt when he discovered he'd been chosen by God to be king?
- In 1 Samuel 9:21, Saul says: "But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?" He even hides when the time comes for him to be crowned (10:20-22). Have you ever felt like that? That you're not good enough to do what you've been asked?
- What do you think might happen when Saul becomes king?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

You will need: art materials; paper

Make sure everyone has access to some art materials – whatever they have in their home. Ask the group to think about times in their lives when they have felt too unimportant to succeed or take on a role or project. Or they can think of a situation where they have felt unprepared or that they didn't have all the right resources, tools or support. Encourage them to create a piece of artwork that reflects both the answer to that question and what they feel God is saying to them. It can be abstract or realistic, however they would like to work.

If you have any reluctant artists, then they can write or film their response instead.

At the end of the activity, if anyone would like to share what they have done, encourage them to hold up their artwork to their camera and tell the rest of the group what they were thinking about.

PRAYER 5 MINS

You will need: artwork from 'Creative response'

Ask everyone to look at their artwork (or writing or video) from 'Creative response' and chat with God about what he has been saying to them. Encourage them to stick their creation up in their house and to come back to it every day this week to continue their conversation with God.

Finish by praying for the group, that God would give them confidence and all the tools they need to be or do what he has in store for them.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.



Jonathan

MEETING AIM

To highlight instances of injustice and the importance of speaking out against them.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Samuel 20:1-7,27-42

BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

You can't help feeling sorry for David. He's been anointed as king but still seems a long way from the throne, acting as a servant to the current king, who God has already rejected. If that wasn't bad enough, Saul is becoming increasingly paranoid and is lashing out at the people around him. David, in particular, has become a target for Saul's rage. Fortunately for David, he has a friend with enough courage to speak up for him. This session will prompt your young people to think about other tyrants, and how ready they are to confront them.

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Ask if they have seen anything particularly unjust over the past week. What did they do about it (if anything)?

INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

Ask for a volunteer and put them in a breakout room. In the volunteer's absence, choose someone in the room to be the 'leader'. Everyone else must copy the leader's movements, but quickly, so that it's difficult to tell who the leader is.

Bring the volunteer back in. Challenge them to identify the leader, based on how the rest of the group are behaving. Allow three guesses. The leader should become the volunteer for the next round. Play as many rounds as time allows.

You could explain that some leaders influence people well and look after them. Other leaders give people a really hard time. Standing up to leaders like that can be hard.

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

You will need: Bibles; large sheets of paper and marker pens, or whiteboard feature

Prepare three large sheets of chart paper. Label one of them 'Jonathan', another 'David' and the third 'Saul'. You could draw a simple picture of each of them in the middle of the paper (just a stick drawing is fine). Alternatively, create three columns on your whiteboard feature, with the three headings at the top.

Read 1 Samuel 20:1-7,27-42 as a group. It's quite a long passage, so perhaps have two or three people take it in turns to read.

Ask the young people what they find out about David, Saul and Jonathan from this passage. Invite them to suggest their thoughts while you write them on the sheets of paper. Or they could add their suggestions themselves on the whiteboard. After a few minutes, look at each of the papers and read out some of the most interesting comments.

Next, ask the young people who they think is the hero of this story, and why. Also, point out that God is never mentioned in this passage. Why is that? What do they think God would have thought of this whole episode?)

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Use the following questions as a starting point for discussion, following on from the reading from 1 Samuel:

- Is it fair to say that Jonathan is the hero of this story? What does he do that is heroic?
- What can we learn from this?
- Why doesn't God intervene to stop Saul treating David so badly? (After all, God has chosen David as king, so why isn't he protecting him?)
- There are plenty of other tyrants and bullies in the world now. Why doesn't God stop them?
- What can we do to stand up to bad leaders and stop them treating people unfairly?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

You will need: large sheets of paper and black and red marker pens, or whiteboard feature; examples of injustices

Label three sheets of paper with 'World', 'Britain' and the name of your town. Arrange these behind you so that the young people can see. It might also help if you provide the group with some examples of injustices. You could try CSW, Open Doors or Amnesty International for some useful material.

Encourage the young people to think about where they see injustice in the world, their country and their local community. Write their suggestions in black pen on the three sheets of paper. Next, ask the young people to reread the problems they've identified and to suggest some ideas of how these situations could be changed. Write these in red pen.

Finish by discussing which of these ideas the group could actually put into practice. Encourage them to do those things.

PRAYER 5 MINS

You will need: tea lights; matches; heatproof surface

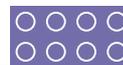
Ask the young people to each think of a person or a group of people who are suffering as a result of injustice. (They may already have someone in mind, following 'Creative response'.) Invite everyone to light a tea light as a sign that they are praying for God to bring justice to this situation.

Next, invite everyone to light a second tea light, this time for themselves: encourage them to pray quietly that God will give them courage to confront injustice in his name.

Perhaps finish with a spoken prayer of your own, asking God to help you all to bring his justice in an unfair world.

SIMEON WHITING

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David

MEETING AIM

To explore God's help in overcoming challenges.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Samuel 17

BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

It's *always* a challenge to find fresh approaches to very familiar passages, but God's word is so deep and living that there is always something new he can say to us through it. This passage has some great principles for young people to cling on to, bearing in mind what David knew about his future at this point – and of course that he didn't know he would become arguably the most famous king of all time and a major player in God's story throughout the world. As with many of the stories of God's plans being worked out, they take time and patience.

JOINING THE SESSION

5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: pens and paper

Challenge the group to send create Bible stories out of emojis and post them into the chat function of your video-conferencing app. If the group can't do this for any reason, then ask them to draw the emojis they want to use.

Once someone has posted or shown their emoji story, everyone else should guess what it is. If you're working with a group with little or no Bible knowledge, then ask them to create the storylines of recent films or TV programmes.

BIBLE EXPLORATION

10 MINS

You will need: Bibles; pens and paper

Help the young people to find 1 Samuel 17 and explain some of the backstory:

Samuel has grown up into a wise and revered prophet. He led Israel under God for a time, but then the people declared that they wanted a king, like all the other countries around them had. God was unhappy, because this meant that they were rejecting him. But in the end, he sent Samuel to announce Saul as the new king. Saul started well, but he started to go his own way, rather than God's, and so God chose David to replace him. At this point, David has been anointed the new king, but Saul is still on the throne.

Read 1 Samuel 17:1-3 and ask the group to think about how the Israelites and the Philistines would have felt at this point. Invite them to draw an emoji that represents their answer. Encourage anyone to share the reason why they chose that particular emoji. Discuss any differences there are.

Do the same with the rest of the passage:

- After verse 11: the best emoji for Saul and the Israelites
- After verse 30: David and David's brothers
- After verse 40: David and Saul
- After verse 44: Goliath
- After verse 54: David, Saul and the Israelites

Once you have finished, create a WhatsApp group chat for the characters in the story. Using the emojis that you chose, think about what Saul, the Israelites, David and David's brothers might say in a WhatsApp conversation.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Use these questions as a guide to discussion, though try to be attentive to the questions the group may have, or significant points that the conversation takes.

- What do you think David learned from all this?
- What have you discovered about God through this story?
- Where are you in this story?
- In what ways might you be more like David?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: art materials

Encourage the young people to create a picture of what they have discovered about God and themselves today. This could be something about their relationship with him, about how God looks after them in all situations, and can be relied upon. Give the young people free rein to do what they like. As you work together, continue your conversations from 'Chatting together'.

Once everyone has finished, if anyone would like to share, give them space to do so. However, be aware that the end product here isn't the most important thing in this activity. Creating something with their hands will help the young people process what they have been exploring.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: any emojis drawn during the session; pens and paper

Explain that you're going to pray using the emojis that you have drawn, and any others that the group might want to draw now. Have a time of quiet where people can show the emojis they want to use to pray to their camera (if they don't want to do this, if this seems too personal, that's OK).

Finish your prayer time by asking what emojis you might use to praise God and think him for always being with you. Encourage everyone to draw those and show them to their cameras.

JOEL TOOMBS

is an experienced mentor, writer and volunteer youth worker.