



# **SUNDAY SCHOOL MINISTRY**

## **Discipleship Plan**

**Year Six**  
**Israel's United Kingdom**  
**(Part 1)**

Deacon Jerome Yorkshire, Sr., Sunday School Superintendent  
Deacon Eric Dolce, Director of Discipleship  
Reverend Patrick J. Walker, Senior Pastor

## Israel's United Kingdom

Lesson One: The Curious Case of King Saul Page 3

Lesson Two: When Kings Forget God Page 4

Lesson Three: God's Kind of King Page 5

Lesson Four: When the Future Breaks into the Present Page 6

## Lesson 1: The Curious Case of King Saul

**Primary Verses:** "...And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you and on all your father's house? And Saul answered and said, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?" 1 Samuel 9:20-21 (NKJV)

**Teaching Text:** 1 Samuel 9-10

**Supporting Text:** Judges 20-21

The subject of Saul, the Benjamite who became Israel's first king, has baffled many pastors, teachers, and Bible scholars down through the centuries. The strange series of circumstances surrounding his ascension involves lost animals, his being a lost man, and Israel, via the prophet Samuel, "finding" their king - albeit a rather reluctant royal. It is a curious case indeed. Our place in redemptive history has some part to play in both a proper understanding of these events and adding to our befuddlement.

Having a New Testament lens to examine Old Testament accounts has almost innumerable advantages. Knowing what happens next by merely flipping a page, the blessing of a Christocentric perspective, not to mention centuries of faithful scholarship helping us to interpret the events, are among a myriad of blessings. But there is also a very severe blind spot often caused by a simple failure to be honest. We simply don't see ourselves realistically in the story. This failure takes multiple forms, which has Christians ping-ponged between two poles:

**Pole #1:** "How didn't they see? How didn't they know?" The temptation to look down upon Bible characters for their apparent lack of insight or knowledge of their circumstances or the consequences of their actions ensnares many. Many centuries of distance, while providing tremendous perspective, has also caused many to decrease in empathy for the particular generation discussed in the biblical account.

**Pole #2:** "If I was there I would/wouldn't have..." Turning the sacred pages of scripture and seeing what ought to have been is far easier than doing the same in the pages of our day-to-day living. We are prone to pride which overestimates our ability to do what is right when we know others in the same circumstances sinned. Without a proper estimation of our own weaknesses, we fail to make proper application of the biblical account for our own lives.

**Questions to Consider:** Why does it matter that Saul is a Benjamite? How does knowing that tribe's history influence our understanding of Saul? Or does it matter? Why is Saul looking for donkeys? Is there a developing theme of fathers and sons in the early part of 1 Samuel? In chapter 9, how do the details of Saul's location indicate his ultimate destination (see verses 11, 14, 22, and 25)?

**Challenging the Class:** When God chastises, His righteousness is clearly defended. When God forgives or chooses to overlook sin for a time, His glorious grace is on display. Therefore, when we desire what is contrary to His best for us - and He gives it to us anyway - can He be faulted for granting what we sinfully desired? Doesn't God have the right to determine how He will be honored in any given circumstance?

## Lesson 2: When Kings Forget God

**Primary Verses:** “And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD... but the people took of the spoil...” 1 Samuel 15:17-21 (KJV)

**Teaching Text:** 1 Samuel 15

**Supporting Text:** 1 Samuel 13-14

Can you imagine the President of the United States putting on a black robe, declaring himself the acting Chief Justice of the Supreme Court? Could he say so while the actual Chief Justice was living and demand to keep his presidency too? Or what if the president issued a federal pardon on a group of treasonous men, but appointed a special prosecutor to seek the death penalty against a war hero...who was his own son? Would such a president, performing both acts in the same term, be judged fit for office?

1 Samuel 15 is a fairly well-known chapter. Anyone who has just a little bit of the background story to King Saul's downfall is familiar with this chapter because Saul's failed mission with the Amalekites is often understood as the reason for David's rise and his dynasty. While it is certainly true Saul's disobedience, as displayed in this chapter, may appear to be the proverbial “last straw,” it is not the only strike against him.

In chapter 13, we find Saul's impatience with Samuel causing him to do what any God-fearing Israelite should have found unimaginable. How could anyone outside of the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron offer a sacrifice of any kind? But we find this Benjamite, King Saul, doing just that and Samuel explained the cost of such a reckless maneuver (1 Samuel 13:8-14). In chapter 14, we find Saul willing to execute his own son for unknowingly breaking the rash and senseless edict he pronounced in spite of the fact Jonathan had heroically defeated the Philistines in battle. The King's willingness to see the end of his son's life is rather odd when he was merciful to rebellious men who openly questioned God's choice of a ruler and consequently his right to govern as monarch. In the backdrop of these horrendous acts, Saul makes a monument to celebrate his slackness and half-hearted heeding to God's instruction (1 Samuel 15:12).

**Questions to Consider:** Samuel and Saul's interactions helped form a pattern of how future prophets and kings were to relate to each other. Did one have authority over the other or did they have equal ruling power in different spheres? Did the incomplete status of the Bible in those days impact weight and role of a prophet's words? Was Saul *destined* to fail as king? What accounts for his spectacular rise and fall?

**Challenging the Class:** A main reason coveting is so ruinous is because what we often covet isn't even worth having. Remember how Israel ended up with a king in the first place: they wanted to have what the other nations had. By trying to “keep up with the Jones',” they ended up with the lemon the Jones' bought. We can see the result of a prayer life motivated by envy of others rather than craving God Himself.

### Lesson 3: God's Kind of King

**Primary Verses:** "Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!" 1 Samuel 17:36-37 (KJV)

**Teaching Text:** 1 Samuel 16

**Supporting Text:** 1 Samuel 17

*"Though the story of David and Goliath is popularly known as an example of a great underdog triumphing over great odds, the accent in the biblical account is not upon David's heroism or his glory. Of course, he did receive honor, as the women sang his praises on his return from battle. But David's heroism was not like the heroism of an Achilles or an Odysseus. David did not fight because his honor had been violated, but to vindicate the honor of the Lord."* --Peter J. Leithart,

**God's kind of king is concerned for God's glory—not his own.** Leithart's quotation captures the essence of David's passion. We will see David's undying devotion to God in the Psalms, whether circumstances are pleasant or if they are difficult. But it is in his battle with Goliath that we first see his appropriate emotional attachment to God and a fierce determination to glorify Him.

**God's kind of king isn't our obvious choice for a king.** In light of Goliath's looks and apparent resume, nobody in their right mind would look at Jesse's runt and say, "I bet he can take 'em!" David's willingness to step forward wasn't the only uncommon element in God's use of him. From King Saul's human perspective, David was neither equipped nor had the resume to meet the task of being Israel's champion. But then again, there's a difference between being a national champion and being God's champion.

**God's kind of king is full of faith.** As chapter 17 begins, we find Israel at camp prepared for war, but afraid of the enemy. The foe is considered a giant—everyone is talking about how impossible it is to beat him. Interestingly enough, the Israelite camp has been perplexed and petrified by this challenge for 40 days. The enemy is a giant whose hometown hasn't come up since the days when Joshua had pushed his enemies (presumably Goliath's ancestors) into Gath and the surrounding area (see Joshua 11:21-23). Does any of this synopsis sound familiar? Have you recalled something similar in Israel's history, prior to David?

**Questions to Consider:** How important are themes from previous Bible accounts when studying current ones? Discuss the pros and cons of bringing templates from one story to interpret another Bible story. Are there appropriate comparisons to be made between David and Joseph (son of Jacob)? What about David and Joshua? Are these parallels helpful or are they a distraction from a necessary focus on David?

**Challenging the Class:** The story of David and Goliath has been told and re-told through preaching and teaching for thousands of years. In application, where do YOU fit in the story? Are you more like Goliath, the oppressor? Are you David, the deliverer? Or are you more accurately described as the frightened and befuddled Israelite who has been rescued by an unexpected, undeserved deliverance from God?

## Lesson 4: When the Future Breaks into the Present

**Primary Verses:** “And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan. Saul swore, ‘As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death.’ And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before. And there was war again. And David went out and fought with the Philistines and struck them with a great blow, so that they fled before him. Then a harmful spirit from the LORD came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing the lyre. And Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he eluded Saul, so that he struck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night. 1 Samuel 19:6-10 (ESV)

**Teaching Text:** 1 Samuel 18

**Supporting Text:** 1 Samuel 19-20

Phrases like, “history repeats itself” and “past is prologue” are taken to be axiomatic. If you live long enough, it seems an almost indisputable fact of life “what has been will be again” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). These statements are found almost universally, yet very seldom do we find similar thinking that meets the same conclusion but running in the opposite direction. In other words, many see the idea of how the past predicts the future, but what if it’s actually a future destiny fixed in the providence of God that really shapes current events? What if, it’s really the future breaking into the present rather than the present acting as a forecast for the future?

One re-telling of David’s story might go something like this: He came from Bethlehem, and originally, no one thought much of him—not even his own family. He was destined to be king before anyone had taken any real notice of him. His brothers didn’t believe in Him either and at times even had harsh words for him, mistaking his good intentions for something sinister. But some unprecedented actions on his part brought great accolades from the masses. The leadership of Israel took notice, but rather than giving him sincere recognition, they sought to lay him low by trickery. Eventually, they would seek to take his life overtly and, if need be, they would even use their enemies to accomplish this. However, God had other plans!

We know Saul’s attempt to kill David would eventually be repeated. We could look at these chapters and say, “history repeats itself.” But if we accept that Jesus’ story is the ultimate goal or focus of the Scriptures, isn’t it just as feasible that it’s the future that has broken into David’s present and not the other way around?

**Questions to Consider:** One very strong theme in the reading of David’s early life, before taking the throne, is the very intense loyalty he shares with Jonathan. How is this both an expected and unexpected grace from God in David’s life? How does David’s ascension compare with Samuel’s? How often is deception used as a tactic between Saul and David? Is dishonesty ever justifiable? Why or why not?

**Challenging the Class:** Think of David’s dilemma: he’s anointed to be king while serving the current king. It’s one thing to trust God for one battle in one moment. But how much faith is required when your foe is your king and father-in-law whom you serve faithfully?