

THE THREAD

DISCOVERING THE THREAD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE BIG-PICTURE STORY OF THE BIBLE

PART 2: A PEOPLE RISE. A PEOPLE FALL.

LESSON 3 || SAUL AND THE NEED FOR A KING

SESSION SNAPSHOT

NARRATIVE PASSAGE: 1 Samuel 8:1-9, 1 Samuel 10:17-24

GOSPEL FOCUS: Romans 12:1-2

STUDENT TAKEAWAYS:

- See that the Israelites abandoned God's Kingship for a human king.
- Discover that the source for all of their guidance and wisdom has to be Christ Himself.
- Examine areas in their lives where they are conforming too much to the pattern of the world instead of conforming to Christ.

OVERVIEW:

In this lesson, we meet Samuel at the end of his life. You may know him as the boy his mother, Hannah, prayed desperately for and then dedicated to the Lord. He was considered the last judge and the first major prophet of Israel. In this study, we see that Samuel's sons have become judges. At least two of them have not listened to the Word of God or their father, and have become corrupt. Their wickedness and greed played a role in Israel's decision to want to be like other nations and have a king lead them. By telling God they wanted a king to rule them, they were basically saying, "God, Your plan to rule us isn't good enough. We want a king like everyone else." Even though He knew where it led, God gave them what they wanted. We still tend to do this in our hearts to this day. This lesson will help your students see how this worked out for Israel. Furthermore, they will see that the source for all of their guidance and wisdom can't be the world...it has to be Christ Himself.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, we encourage teachers to help students know *who* wrote a particular book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHY TEACH CONTEXT?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

1 SAMUEL

- *Author:* The author of 1-2 Samuel is unknown. While it's certainly possible that Samuel wrote some of what's recorded in these books, the mention of his death in 1 Samuel 25 means that he didn't write all of it. The books are given the title of "Samuel" because of his prominent role in the establishment of the monarchy.
- *Time frame:* It's difficult to say for sure when 1-2 Samuel was written. It's possible that they were written and edited over some time. More than likely, they were established in their final form around the 10th century BC.
- *Purpose:* The main theme of these books is God's choosing to accomplish His purposes through the lineage of David and to set up Jerusalem as the location for the temple. There are many "ups and downs" throughout 1-2 Samuel, and David goes through times of obedience and rebellion. He experiences blessings and consequences for sins.

ROMANS

- *Author:* Paul was the author of Romans.
- *Time frame:* Romans was probably written from Corinth in the winter of 56-57 AD.
- *Purpose:* Since the church in Rome had not received comprehensive theological teaching on salvation and other implications of following Christ, Paul wrote Romans to ensure a good understanding of such things. In addition, since many Jewish Christians were rejecting some of the new Gentile converts, a level playing field needed to be given to all believers. This is what Paul was advocating for in Romans.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- **GETTING STARTED**— An introductory activity designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- **THE STORY**— A section featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- **THE THREAD**— A special emphasis where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- **WRAPPING UP**— An application-focused segment helping teenagers ask the question, “How am I impacted by what I learned today”?

GETTING STARTED

- *Goal:* To help students begin to see that what we want may not always be good for us.
- *Set-Up:* None needed.

FIRST, begin by leading students in an opening discussion. **Ask:**

- **Can you think of a time when you wanted something really badly, but it turned out not to be such a good idea?**

Allow students time to think. If they need some nudging, give them options like the following: a job they wanted that turned out to be awful, an outfit they loved that turned out to be a dud, a relationship, an experience, a gadget they purchased, and so on. Encourage students to think about little children; they do this type of thing all the time. (What happens when you give a child as much candy as she wants? She eats until she’s sick to her stomach.) Be prepared to share your own story with students.

THEN, allow students to process this a bit more. **Ask something like:**

- **Why do we sometimes do this type of thing? How do you explain that we can want something that isn’t in our best interests?**
- **Let’s take it a step further. How do you explain people who do things they KNOW for sure are not good for them?**

FINALLY, begin to transition into your time of Bible study by **saying something like:**

- **As we continue our look at the big-picture story of the Bible, remember that we’re talking about the story of Israel’s early years as a nation. The people have inherited the Promised Land and are figuring out exactly how to live as God’s people. But in today’s lesson, we see them mess up a bit. The Israelites ask God for something that is not in their best interests, and God’s response is different than you might think. Let’s take a closer look.**

TRANSITION TO THE STORY.

THE STORY

- *Goal:* For students to see that God was the only one ever meant to be the King of Israel, but the people lost sight of this.
- *Set-Up:* Students will need a Bible or a Bible app. You may find that a dry-erase board is helpful for jotting down some notes, but it’s not essential.

FIRST, explain that you will be looking at the story of Israel getting a king in 1 Samuel 8:1-9 and 1 Samuel 10:17-24. This decision would affect them forever. If you’d like, use the Connecting The Dots section below to review or fill in the gaps between your last lesson and this one.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

As you teach *The Thread*, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it to review or connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- Israel had been establishing itself as a nation under leaders called “judges.”
- Judges were probably more like what we would think of as a president. There was a rotating cast of leaders, some good, some bad.
- The people went through a cycle of drawing close to God and then falling away. This led to a lot of instability for Israel.
- Samuel, one of Israel’s most influential prophets, was born. Your students may know the story of Samuel and Eli, where God called to Samuel, and Eli encouraged the young boy to listen and follow God.

Inform students that you’re going to be reading through a story of how the kings of Israel came to be. Let students know that you’ll work together to cover the passage and need volunteers to help you read. Students may know the facts about the story of Saul becoming king, or this could be totally new. Either way, keep pointing them back to the heart of the people.

Start by having students turn to 1 Samuel 8:1-9. While they’re finding it, provide some of the basic context for the book using the Bible Background. Then, read or have a student read this passage. **Say something like:**

- **We find Samuel here as an old man, so he appoints his sons to be judges over Israel. Remember, a judge was not a king. They kept order and helped keep laws, but they didn’t have the same power a king had. The people were tired of Samuel’s sons taking advantage of them and decided they wanted a king like the other nations had.**

THEN, ask something like:

- **Why do you think the people may have wanted a king over a judge?**
 - o *Answer:* The people may have been looking to their earthly leaders more than they were looking to God. It seems they wanted to be like the surrounding countries, something God had specifically sought to protect against (this was the very reason for the Law, to set Israel apart as a people after God’s heart).
- **When Samuel asked God if this was what He wanted, what was His response? Why is His response not surprising?**
 - o *Answer:* Number one, He knew it was coming. Number two, the people had been turning away from God, off and on, for some time. God keeps reminding them that He is God; He doesn’t leave them. But they keep wanting to rely on what they can see.
- **Do you think God allowing a king implies that He gave up on the Israelites?**
 - o *Answer:* No. God is in control, but we make choices. The people had forgotten that God wouldn’t have allowed the judges to rule for long. He would have cared for them just like Eli and his sons. However, when we continue to turn from God, He won’t make us love or follow Him. God allowed the people one last chance when He said, “Warn them about having a king.” They could have said, “No, we believe You are our King.” He allowed them their choice, even though they would eventually suffer the consequences. Yet, we see that God uses the line of a king, king David, to bring the Messiah into the world. This shows us that even in our poor choices, God is still able to accomplish His plan.

NEXT, read or have a student read 1 Samuel 10:17-24. Then direct their attention to verses 17-19. Ask something like:

- **What do you hear in God’s heart in verses 17-19? What is He trying to say to the people? Do they miss it?**
 - o *Answer:* Once more, God points out that while the details may not always be the way the people would have preferred, He is the one who has rescued them again and again from their hurt and pain. He reminds them that they are abandoning Him. Yet, the people are still ready to abandon God for an earthly king. He gives them another chance to say, “We changed our mind. We want God.” Instead, they stand waiting for their new king.

- **Look at verses 20-24. What do you see about the Lord's heart in this passage?**
 - *Answer:* Even though the people are not choosing God's way, He doesn't leave them. God is the One who chooses their earthly king. As is true many times of God's plan, it still isn't exactly how the people would have done it. Saul is afraid and hiding. Yet, God still showed He was in control and caring for the people.
- **Why do you think the people were okay with a king God chose but turned from God as King?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Take some time and unpack the thread you've seen up to this point in how the people would come toward God and then turn from Him. God kept trying to show them that He was the one who took care of them, but they kept missing the point. The people thought they were getting their way, but still, God wanted to care for them.

WRAP UP your look at the narrative passage by **saying something like:**

- **The people of Israel should have known better. They should have trusted God to take care of them in ways He had done over and over again. Instead, they compared themselves to countries and people who didn't know God. We will talk more about what happened to Saul and Israel as a result of having a king in the next few weeks. However, what we see here is an example that happens to all of us: we want to be more like the world around us than what God wants us to be. It's so easy for our eyes to wander to what others are doing that we forget God has been taking care of us all along.**

IF STUDENTS DON'T HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE THREAD AND SEE WHERE YOU MIGHT FIND THE GOSPEL IN THE BIG-PICTURE NARRATIVE OF SCRIPTURE.

THE THREAD

FIRST, instruct students to turn to Romans 12. If you choose, while they are finding the book of Romans, provide them with some brief context by referencing the Bible Background. When you've finished, read or have a student read Romans 12:1-2, then lead students in a discussion. Begin by **saying something like:**

- **In this passage, we see Paul talking about God being in charge of our lives. Let's look at both verses in this passage separately. When we look at Romans 12:1, what is God asking of us here, and why?**
 - *Answer:* That we put ourselves aside, even our whole bodies, to be the Lord's. In other words, God wants all of who we are. He wants us to remember all He has done for us. Christ conquered sin on our behalf and made a way back to a right relationship with God.
- **How is what He asks an act of sacrifice and worship?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Ask students to give examples from their own life about what they give to God to be in control of and how that's also an act of worship. Tell a story from your own life about how you are willing for God to be the authority in your life in light of His sacrifice. Try to move them deeper than just saying, "He died on the cross to take my sins." How does what He has done change who we are? How does this show us how to have hope and know we are loved?

NEXT, look at 12:2. **Ask:**

- **What is Paul saying in this verse? Tell me in your own words.**
 - *Answers will vary.* Paul helps us see that God asks us to be different from the world, but He's the One who helps us be different. If we allow God to change the way we think, we can learn to think more like Him because we are focused on Him.
- **How can we tend to copy the behaviors of this world, as the verse says?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Try to get students to be honest about how tempting it is to just fit in with the world. You may need to explain that "the world" is anything that does not honor Christ and how this can seep into every

area of our lives. It's in the stuff we watch (TV, movies, online), the way we talk, the way we dress, and the choices we make.

- **What similarities do you see between this verse and the story of the Israelites getting a king?**
 - *Answer:* God reminds us in both that we should allow Him to be in charge because of all He has done for us. In addition, He provided a way out in both instances: following Him. The answers may vary here, but take the time to draw similarities between the two.
- **According to this verse, how do we fight against being like the world?**
 - *Answer:* The Lord doesn't expect us to figure this out on our own. He knows how easy it is for us to look to the world instead of Him. That's why it's vital that we allow Him to change the way we think about things.

FINALLY, say something like:

- **When we read verses like these, it can seem confusing. We can be tempted to just make a list of “do’s and don’ts.” That wasn’t ever God’s plan. He wants our hearts to be drawn into a relationship with Him. When He changes how we think about things, we are continually transformed to be more like Him. You may have noticed that Samuel went to God and asked Him what He wanted and what His thoughts were. The people just looked at each other and decided they wanted to do things their own way. The question we have to ask ourselves is, “where is our heart?” Do we want to know God’s will, or would we rather do things our own way?**

IF YOUR STUDENTS DON'T HAVE ANY MORE QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE WRAPPING UP SECTION.

WRAPPING UP

- *Goal:* To be honest and reflect on how not to be distracted by the world but instead give ourselves totally to the Lord and let Him be in charge.
- *Set-Up:* Provide something to write with and on for each student.

FIRST, remind students that you've spent a lot of time today looking at God being our King. You looked at how the Israelites chose Saul over God and realized that we can do the same thing in our lives. Sometimes we can easily make excuses for following the world. Explain that we say things like, “Everyone does this or does that.” And just like the Israelites, we compare ourselves to people who don't have Christ in charge of their lives. **Say something like:**

- **We often make excuses because we just want to do things our way and not God's. Today as we wrap up, I'm going to ask you to be honest with yourselves and allow the Lord to speak to your heart.**

THEN, distribute pen and paper. Explain that you're going to sit in silence for a moment. Then challenge students to be honest and write down all of the ways that they want to do what the world wants more than what God wants. Give students a few moments to do this.

Ask students to look at their list and write down WHY they don't give God their whole lives. Challenge them to identify what draws their attention to the world and away from God. Again, ask them to be honest.

NEXT, tell students that while they don't need to share what's on their paper, you would like to have a discussion with them. Take some time and brainstorm ways that students can give their entire selves to the Lord. It starts with the ability to trust that He does indeed want to take care of us and always has our best interests in mind. We can get to know Him better and understand His character through continuing to regularly meet Him in His Word. We can allow others with deep relationships with Christ to help us learn how to hear His voice better. You may want to take a few moments and discuss accountability and how this will help them stay on track.

FINALLY, finish with something like the following:

- My challenge to you this week is to continue being honest with God about how you are drawn to be like the world. Ask Him to continue to be in charge of your life, and be honest about the ways you struggle. Look into your heart and find out what it would take for God to have total control.

If your students don't have any more questions, close your time in prayer.

- If you've purchased the corresponding devotional journal, remind students they'll be working through Week 16 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions and to give memorizing this week's verse their best shot.
- If you're utilizing the digital devotions included in the Thread curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well that you want to share?
- Something that didn't work that you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns at feedback@youthministry360.com.